POETRY

Madness is a personal metaphor

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"Pool (Strobl)" by Peter Rieser

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My body is a tree. So I stand stock-still on the sidewalk wriggling my toes in the dirt. If my head is a wired eyrie, birds are thoughts of prey. Sometimes they come clutching a dead rat, others a kicking sheep. I spin under a bus shelter for better nestling. I tell the mountain trees waiting for the bus I am a vessel that takes the shape of the humours. Tell, don't show, *this is my handle and this is my spout.* There is no space to be a teapot on that government bus. I tell my crockery friends riding with me that I'm separated from my world by a layer of wasp wings so that when I touch my community I'm not actually touching them and when I see them they colour differently. The strangers peer back at me through a cataract over their one conventional eye. When someone flags down the bus I creep over on my bottom and wriggle fluently down the stairs. That's how water would do it, the world's greatest solvent. The irony is, when someone asks for a drink, I am dry. In the kitchen wall above the sink I'm a promontory of sludge-filled steel. That is why my therapist lies on the couch while I protrude from her vision board. She pushes me to narrate, I gurgle and sputter, spitting out muck on her notebook, where it forms words like water on a duck's back. She tells me that poetry is a personal metaphor. Remember this when we talk of cures: a metaphor untranslated could fail an entire language and a unanimous language often fails its instances of poetry. When I hold forth on birds for two hours non stop, in my head we are all just going *I want to live, I want to live.*

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