

roma
amor



Allan Graubard

Photos by Ira Cohen
Drawing by Thom Burns



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I

When thunder echoes through the city and the rusty smell of rain blows in, a curious thing happens. In that moment that precedes the downpour, the air heavy and humid, people on the street lift upward. They naturally seek the source of the water beginning to fall. They lean on the backs of their toes, open their mouths and sense the pleasure in becoming weightless.

Then it's over and the umbrellas come out, and they huddle for shelter where they can, relieved to be out of the rain. And however faintly they smile, it's there. Nature has taken over, their struggles have vanished.

For a fabulous few moments they are free.

Not birds yet. But not humans either.

Roma is a steel rectangle that floats above the earth and below the clouds, turning, turning slowly as people walk around it the opposite way. They believe, they want to believe, that by doing so they sustain themselves and their city.

The twin motions keep the city, and their dream of it, intact.

Their present knows its past but not its future. They cannot see farther than their need to walk in counterpoint to whatever it is that eludes them.

II

The Corso Trieste curves up and away from the Via Nomentana and disappears at the Annibaliano. It's nothing much today, a quick escape route for cars and buses. But thirty years ago it seemed as if the Corso wouldn't end, opening up and out from our scorn, our laughter and our tears at having met, once again, on a small rectangular screen a few of the images that would later mean so much to us: when we caught Brando in Japan or McQueen in China, when Astaire drew down about him the anxious failures of detente on a lonely Australian terrace and an old Keaton captivated Beckett against an endless brick wall. And how about Tierney or Ava in Mexico, smoking down her Pepe and Pedro on a desperate crashing beach, or Taylor's nervous hands that echoed her aching smile, and Ida's tough gaze that said it all about men who knew they cared but wouldn't admit it.

There were 200 ratty seats, aisles strewn with wrappers and butts, a few absurd condoms for those lucky enough to score inside, there in the back row, fucking slowly to the rhythm of the music on rare evenings when the place was empty and the cost of a ticket low enough.

You could get a needle in the bathroom and shoot up if the need hit you or buy a pint in a paper coke container and drink yourself pretty. And out front they sold those thin sweet sausages spread with hot mustard that sweated grease on crusty day-old bread.

The manager lived in the apartment above the projectionist's room, and now and then he'd call for a card game and beer after the last feature, and the smoky walls kneaded the drift that fell from the ceiling.

His wife was a whore who retired too soon but didn't mind the boredom, the night after night of that flickering light, and the trestle train pulse of those celluloid sprockets. Better that than ptomaine tricks and dawn exhaustion, all for the rent and a new dress now and then to blanch the pallor.

The cops got their own there, too, with the monthly hand out and a dick up the ass if you know what I mean.

Amerigos was the name, with the "I" and the "e" perennially off-kilter on a busted marquee that never changed.

Who had the money and who had the will?

And what did it matter that we used ourselves up, foolish disasters in our venomous youth.

Are we any the worse for it now? Are you? Still dodging shadows that track us down for the con, our suits and heels just a little too cheap, and all of the rest of the gas that keeps us running between desks and doldrums, a bottle of bitters to soften the blow...

Yeah, *Amerigos*, where time was a doll pouty with rouge and space milky white through the glandular night...

I don't know this place, these foreign accents and rancid walls, the dust of absent voices, the glitter that rains from sudden eyes and the sharp crusts of faceted lamps on whirling corners. I don't know the language of those who pass me and why, without reason, as if on cue, they laugh to themselves then with each other. The cafes seem of a piece, and the bars, like so many violent waves, reserve their crashing thunder for dawn.

I followed the signs. I bought a ticket; I packed some clothes and left, telling no one, not even my wife. Now I wonder when or if I will return, There is something here, however ephemeral it may be, that returns to me a sense that *I have been here before; I have known what I do not; and the strangeness I feel is my own estrangement.*

Ah, what's the use of trying to explain what pursues me, what I pursue, that fills me and empties me and sustains me and corrupts me?

It is enough. Basta! It is enough.

And need I mention the women who wind their way through me, searching to see that I, as they, have abandoned the need for searching for anything at all.

For here it is Roma, and there it is Roma, and then it is Roma, and it is Roma that swallows Roma, and the time of Roma to come.



III

The city is under attack. Barrages by day and snipers by night... It ends, it begins, it ends ...

Then the trucks rumble in with food and water...

And we queue up...

Tomorrow exists, it doesn't exist! There is nothing to stop me from believing it exists, and nothing more that I want to avoid, with my loaf of bread, my chicken stew, my two bottles of wine. And when I wake up. But I don't. I've taken the oath. I mouth the words. My cracked lips runnel blood onto a scale the city holds near the sun.

(Its pans two craters, its weights are corpses threaded together with the tough silver frenzy of the wind...)

Wait for me! Stark blank stares, stubble, concussion concussion...

We are waiting together for each other to wake...

I've lost the words. And in the sullen red dance of smoldering skin I pull my hair out in clumps and knots.

The nightmare of time is a circus of trust that we turn to and turn...

Ah, my friends who let me turn!

IV

The sales lady lives her life in the store she works in, selling hats just out of fashion. Now and then she'll interest someone in the jewelry she stocks, silver and gold from India and Afghanistan, inexpensive things: necklaces, bracelets, anklets and rings set with moonstone or opal.

But hats are her specialty, especially for women like her, younger women who will soon take her place, infected by love, the need to love, and the absence of it all too often; that endless dull ache that settles finally in the eyes and the thin arch of the lips below.

She knows them when she sees them, and for a moment perhaps they know she knows. So they make small talk about the hat, how well it fits, where it came from, the usual. By then the purchase is secondary, but if it comes she'll drop the price a bit out of respect for their pathos in being alone.

Only once did a woman insist on paying the cost on the tag. "I'll take a bargain when it's worth it," she said.

The sales lady gave her the change and wrapped up the hat then walked to the back and poured some coffee. It was almost four, the sky darkening, the street nearly empty.

And as she sipped, the cup warming her hands, she remembered how it was when passion beat her blind and time doubled back and her veins turned to mud, and she vomited hope on that living room floor, gagging on pain in spite of her anger.

Then yearning for it all to happen again, and finding it some, oh yes, she wasn't a fool. But the men didn't stay. There was nothing she could do to keep them true.

So now she sells hats; runs the shop, does the books and keeps things even. The money isn't much but she has a few friends and a sister in the south with a good little house just up from the sea.

It doesn't mean she'll pack herself up.

"You'll come when you come," her sister wrote. "I've redone the bedroom. Call when you get this."

She called. They talked.

"I'll think about it," she said. "I'm thinking about it."

The next morning she woke with the dawn, washed, fixed some breakfast and fed her cat. Then she did what she's done almost too long. She took the metro to her stop, walked three blocks and opened the store.

It's just one of those Gypsy circus troupes that travel from town and town. They've come back and rented an old weedy parking lot where the river bends and the flotsam builds up, all that tattered clothing and garbage, dead rats, mounds of newspaper, driftwood, plastic bottles, oil slicks, anything and everything that floats and can't make it out with the tide topped with a yellow film, the *memento mori* of decay...

That's where they pitched their tent with a few raggedy pennants waving from the top and a ticket booth before the canvas flap that made for an entrance. And the local kids and grandparents, the grandparents taking the kids, the kids taking the grandparents, lined up, happy to be there for an hour's distraction.

It isn't expensive, not like the great circuses downtown, with their three elephants and five tigers, acrobats, tightrope walkers, flame eaters, a 10-piece band that plays the latest jive and an ear-splitting speaker system that you can hear from far enough away to know they're going at it.

This little Gypsy circus, this touching *cri de coeur*, had none of that save for the tent, the ticket booth, a dog and pony show, but the pony awfully old, a bit bow legged and the rider not less than fifty, still in tights and a low slung corset, heavily made up, dyed blond, perhaps it was a wig, I couldn't tell, and neither could anyone else, and neither did anyone care to guess.

They could afford a ticket, you see, the grandparents taking the grandkids, the grandkids taking the grandparents, applauding and laughing as if their life depended on it in this depressingly futile little circus that opened up one night with a few announcements and the whiteface clown on the corner by the grocery store handing out yellow sheets of onion paper with the name of the circus, the show times and cost in the right-hand corner

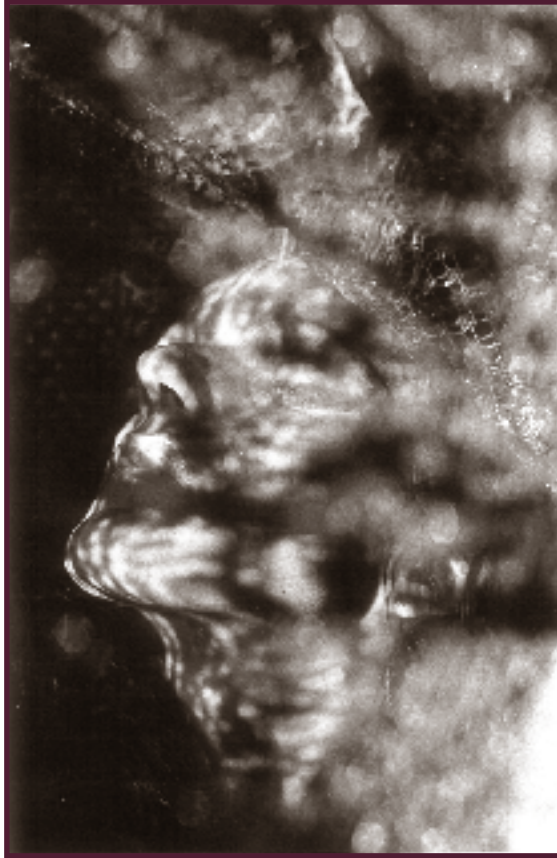
So the circus tent went up, the tent with the flap for an entrance, and the dog and pony show played twice a day and it went on for a week by the bend in the river where the garbage piled up below the road...

V

There she is, slipping behind a corner, her hair ravaging the distance between us. Then the square, flocks of pigeons, an ambulance, idling engines, a mother holding a baby asleep in her arms, an exec on a phone, a student, a nurse, a tourist, the incidental affairs of summer 3 p.m. when the sky bears its teeth and the revolving white reflections spark silver windows in some stabbing delusion of flame, a cloud creeping in over the aerial sculptures, seagulls, and that slow corrupt tumescence breeding through a quick memory.

She saw me; she didn't want to stop. And with every step she takes she digs her heels down into the shadow she keeps in her thought – that night last month when we stripped each other of phantoms and flesh...

There's that, yes, there's that. Because she didn't call and when I did she didn't pick up.



He cleans the toilets, a small man near eighty who once hired boys to deliver his meats. A butcher, yes a butcher down on his luck, no kids, a wife who shuffles around, and the cupboard just full enough to keep them alive. So he arrives at seven and leaves at three, and keeps the place working and clean. And if someone feels flush, they'll leave him a tip in the dish by the sink and wish him good luck.

There's an old mottled window crisscrossed with wire and rimed with decades of pasty grunge, and when the sun pours down, as it does for an hour, the place tinges yellow and the lights seem useless.

He doesn't mind the work; it pays the bills. Sometimes he thinks he's back at his shop cutting chops for the counter, and the air smells of blood and split bone through the saw dust with a woman's perfume wafting above.

And if he nods off, he wakes with a start, confused. And he checks the toilets to see if they're there, and finding they are, returns to his chair...

VI

Near dawn, when the clubs have slowed to a crawl and the city, for a few minutes at least, seems to sleep the sleep of the just, carrying birds, cars, drunks, trucks, planes and dogs along with it, fantastic creatures come out to play, flickering there before the sun dissolves them: hermaphrodites decked in gory comradeship where bums bury suns in nauseous lupine and spittle spins trumpets in a distant deviled sigh.

If you catch them, in those long tunnel alleys between nowhere and nowhere, gutting each other with sharp silver tongues, as if wit were torture and blood a very meager soup, crashing lady luck for a moment's laughter, you'll forfeit a dream, no more, no less—sooty phantoms that they are in the first cold fortunes that burn us to life...

VII

Where the Via Martignano and the Via Bradano cross, a small park fronts the Villa Bianca: a nondescript triangle surrounded by trees with a wild grassy knoll. The place wouldn't raise an eyebrow were it not for the fifteen or so punks who slip in near midnight for a smoke, some smack and a serious session of circle jerk. It's been going on now for months, long enough to entice other punks from other neighborhoods and, as a result, the newspapers. Save that the journalists who've witnessed the thing usually end up playing along with them if only to know it best from "inside," which kills the story. Who would admit—for all the world to read—that masturbation becomes more delectable when shared? And who would add in the need for a return trip to "test the conviction" that solitude here is a cultural fix and arousal something else?

So the ritual keeps its secrets. And the cops have turned a deaf ear to complaints.

Sexism doesn't play a role in this either. Guys and girls go at it trading gasps and shivers with singular purpose: how to extenuate pleasure for the longest possible time before orgasm charges from one to another, the sweat rising from the flesh and that salty glandular mist sweeter by far than any perfume.

To say it's "addictive," and leave it at that, obscures the intention. For coitus here is simply not the point. And, in fact, I haven't known anyone who's made the date who wants anything afterward.



Don't get me wrong. I'm not there for "research" save in the doing. I admire the punks. And it's not gotten to the point where overflow comes in people. If the circle grows too big, the friction won't work. There's an acute sense of impiety here that quantity diffuses, not to mention the need for intimacy that fifteen just about hangs in the balance.

No tourist theme parks, if you get my drift.

That I'm one of the older guys doesn't mean much either. Nor does it matter that I don't sport a tattoo, a belly button ring or any of the other scars that my mates cut, burn or crush into their bodies.

Nor do we talk about much beforehand, during or after. Narcissism has found a form it always should have had, of course; an insatiably delicate bursting of cum that we make in jerking together...

One morning as he woke a strange thought filled his mind. He didn't like it at first, who would? But soon enough he couldn't avoid it. Whatever he did, it returned a bit more trenchant, a trifle more demanding.

He had to kill his wife.

Yes, it had come to that.

His friends didn't help. When he told them about it, they chuckled then asked him if anything was wrong? *With him, not her...*

So he stopped seeing his friends.

His wife noticed the change. He was unusually sullen.

But she thought better of prying. In fact, she wasn't interested in prying at all or in much else about him.

So they continued on as they had, neither of them raising the issue that would soon undo them.

One afternoon she left work abruptly, drove home, packed a few things, wrote a quick note, called a cab and left.

Explain? How do you explain 25 years?

Weeks passed then a month, two months.

She called now and then when he wasn't there and left messages on the machine.

"Don't worry about me. I'm fine."

"Send the mail to this post office box."

"Nostalgia... what a pain."

The irony here is simple: his wish became her reality without him having to lift a finger.

The only thing missing, of course, was a body, *her body*, and a way to get rid of it.

I saw her there walking with the rest on the path that wound up toward the mouth of the volcano. She wore the same white hooded shawl as the others, and walked with the same ritual grace. I was there in the pit where the fires crackled and the whirling sparks excised from the night wind a pair of eyes, brittle, floating, in the oval of the hood you wore; your eyes that beat with the rhythm of the dead you walked with, once, in a dream.

Where are you now that the fires have died? And where those flames that licked up as if to mock us, your comrades silently climbing? Where the city that once bore the name *Roma*, which is backwards for *amor*?

Once in a dream you saw me seeing, but your sight was empty as the night is high, in the smoke and the glitter of the fiery pit...

He's a reporter for the local daily and makes his check on crime: petty theft, grand larceny, second-degree murder, assault, counterfeiting, abduction, wife beating, pedophilia, rape, black-mail, mercy killing. He's been doing it for a decade and, while he's not too happy about it all – he considers himself a trash collector, in other words, a garbage man – he lives off his pay and wouldn't know how to live any other way.

What his editor and his readers don't know is that he finds distraction now and then in substituting fiction for fact. Minute alterations goad him. And sometimes he has the sense that with a few more touches he'll have altered the thing just enough before it tips into something else. The sheer possibility of an alteration in his and others perception of what happened, who did it and why excites him. The risk of being caught, of being fired, with a quick exit from a profession that capitalizes on disgrace the better to condemn it when it infects one of their own, compels him.

Subtle shifts in a frame of reference can add up, deepening or lessening how well a crime attracts or disgusts us and, given the atmosphere in which a trial takes place, foul the jury with an uncertain bias it would not have otherwise.

It's happened before despite a judge's strict instructions not to allow media coverage to affect jurors, and sequestration during final deliberations.

The "guilty" or "not guilty," with this or that extenuation, seems to issue then from a background prepared in part by the perspectives revealed within, if not behind, a sudden irony, fulsome adjective or aberrant neutrality. And however minor the trick he knows at least how he made it work.

He's played the game this way for a few years and, because he's gained an audience who expect no less from him, keeps it up with the unknowing approval of his boss: a tough lady who scoured the political sewers for stories for three decades until she took control of the place with the same pith that kept her in the limelight from one administration to the next.

That they're friends and colleagues doesn't hurt him. It only spices the mix he makes, when he realizes that he'd better use it for *this* case or he'll throw in the towel, take a severance check and vanish good and simple.

His professionalism depends on his tracking the taint. He keeps a record book with the care of a lexicographer attacking a forgery. He does this not only to preserve the evidence of his misdeeds but to seize himself in them. He perpetuates a conscience that feeds his passion for fakery.

He's even gone so far as to place a title on the book, which reminds him of a writer he once read obsessively. But instead of *Crimes of the Future*, he calls it *Crimes for Tomorrow*.

The crimes he writes today will be those he dreams tomorrow... page 1, jump page 11.



VIII

Roma flutters between places licking the skull of absence then veers up and disappears into the sun. There is no way to search for *Roma*, its brittle eggshell coasts where troglodyte monks tend smoldering ovens; its thick olive forests where kites flock at dawn; the villages that crest above the early fog like flash imprints on myopic eyes; and all the rest that recalls to us the strips and tares of a place whose time no longer sleeps or dreams. That we believe we have yet to establish any reason here does not dissuade us from sensing an immanence that thought alone sustains. Nor has it smothered a history that is more our own, on that account, than not. If *Roma* were merely a mirror to what we gain and lose in our daily struggle to wrest from space a similitude of happiness, I doubt it would compel us as it does. Just out of reach, it beguiles and aborts, the way an antler, in rising from the sea... but enough...

"Roma," it says, *"Roma Amor..."*

IX

They struck in a factory by the river. Anarchists had infiltrated months before, taking jobs on the line and organizing as they could. The workers were pissed off all right—with lowered wages, several firings and no end in sight to their union giving up, bit by bit, what they had gained. So it didn't take much for a slow down. When the company responded by locking them out and bussing in scabs, the gambit was set. But rather than prompt a ruckus by day, which they knew they would lose, they paid off the guards and crept in by night. The next morning they started the machines and kept at it. The cops appeared, just as they should. By that time, a thousand supporters ringed the place, some of them armed. And so it went. The press flocked in. The showdown mushroomed.

Were the authorities up to barging in under a cloud of teargas and guns? Not really. So when the workers offered to buy the place, the owners agreed. And for a few months it all seemed to mesh. Demand increased, production rose. Everyone did what they do best.

What the workers didn't know was how easy it was to fall flat when the price for oil shot sky high, and the truckers passed on the cost. There was also the little matter of being the sore thumb in an otherwise maudlin pie that venture capitalists had just begun to cut.

So when they couldn't make pay roll and knew they wouldn't for a while, they decided to give up the ghost. They junked the machines, burned the records and went on the dole.

Their anarchist buddies slipped away, too, a few of them with pockets bulging. "Spoils" they wrote, and rightfully so. If it wasn't for them, fewer workers would have spent more hours making less money in an industry about to be plundered. Was anyone the worse for it? And while some of the crew felt fucked from both ends and vented their rage in local tavernas, they also knew they loved every moment of it, however temporary the triumph seemed now.

So they let them go, with a nod and a wink, talking of riot and insurrection for the next round: no two ways about it, no deals and no leaders.

We're waiting, I suppose, for something to prove them right.

And wool clouds bled thin volcanoes, white ash clinging to black space, the dagger of time inching downward, a palisade moon in yellow bloat with quick soft auroras.

I no longer cared what called me back to her, why I kept returning despite her distance, which she used to protect herself. Did it matter that she never once gave me reason to hope that she would be there, when I arrived? Or that she would give me what I desired? Did it matter that I never asked myself if she meant it despite the pleasure we shared given the cold undertones that resonated within her as if, by being there with me, an uncertain freedom flared up that she knew, having known it before how many times I dare not say.

I would come to her near midnight and knock on her door, which she opened with a sleepy nonchalance, as if she'd only half expected me to return.

She had been asleep all right but not a hair on her head gave any sense that she had lain back on the pillows. Nor was there about her that odor of crushed linen, of breath mingled with wool. And when she locked the door behind me, she took my hand and led me to the bedroom; that room where we traced our passions against a vanishing hour.

She rose with the first of the light and prepared coffee, which we sipped still flush with having once again not abused with sentiment something we quite selfishly enjoyed.

Her name was *Roma*. But for me it always spelled *amor*.



X

The woman walks through the rain, her hair dripping rain, her eyes become rain, and deep behind her ribs where her heart beats it rains, it rains in the rain, raining where it rains. The raining rain that rains in rain. And the water pours from the sky, the sky falls to the earth, rises in mist, scatters, puddles, squirms and shatters. Rain striking rain. This woman of rain, this woman become the rain: her fingers, hands, neck, face... this faceless rain that faces her face and rains where it rains, solitary in the rain, an incipient promise of wandering rain in a city of rain... tonight in the rain... because of the rain...because of the rain... that rains in her heart...alchemical rain...

The streets are full of shadows thrown by people who are not there. We don't see them; we can't. But when the lens of the eye flushes with light and memory blanches white, the street reveals its internal night as if it were a body opened for autopsy.

Crowds of shadows press in and pass, mutely weaving around and through us—we who believe we're alive.

XI

To continue...

I dreamed last night that I was the city I wrote, a city the same size as the city around me. The city I dreamed, the city around me, where I lived with my wife and friends, this immense concrete commedia.

I have never enjoyed the company of egoists. Some laudable act prevents me from crushing them.

I dreamed despite myself, perhaps to spite myself. What I felt millions felt, what they felt I felt.

(to continue)

Report of the Examining Physician

Patient exhibits delusional attitudes with frequent amnesia. Fitful sleep. Random obsessive eating. He has twice cut his forehead on the edge of the windowsill by "losing balance" and claims unconsciousness.

He writes: "I have become the city. My arms are composed of concrete and metal, glass, wood. My legs, shadow craters, fuck hypostatic roses. Nightmares have no guilt. Slender metals dripping pus. Escape? Not on your life. And even if I could enter the back garden with my hands tied behind me, riot flowers storming the abyss.

And as I became the city I noticed that I could move in four dimensions, including time, living and reliving certain neighborhoods of youth, the exceptional chaos of youth.

And I found in the city's shadow a version in miniature, heroic clouds, phaetons in full bloom.

Report of the Examining Physician

Patient plays piano for a few hours each day in an aleatory style; repeating motifs. Some of it is amusing or ominous.

(to continue)

The patient can shape shift when he wants, which is a belief based on a reality.

The patient believes he is the city, that he dreams the city in his dreams.

June 39: The patient walked out by the front door early this morning. We will not pursue him.

August 52nd, The patient swims in a small lake, perfectly alone, the forest surrounding the water.

The patient enters the city that he knows he dreams. He finds his corpse there and stretches between two decades as a drum for the rain to play with the birds.

The patient is a dust demon just about noon.

The official report noted a difficult message over the wireless, quite indiscernible. We we plotted the position and turned to help.

He repeats the vanishing act when I want him to.

I dreamed I was the city I dreamed.

The city that dreams through the dreams I dream.

And when I walk through the dream windows smell of spring gardens and black cherry trees...

XII

I returned in the morning. I stepped from one city to another, and found what I left, what I no longer needed to find—the useless increments of a grimy face, a quick shadow, a heartbeat that spun about an ineffable ransom for having come at all, without reason, for the simple sense of touching again this voiceless prism on the banks of a river that wound from the sea.

Do not ask me what it was that forced my departure or how, with the same distracted anguish that we are all prey to, I held the ephemeral rope that others too eagerly threw away. Do not ask me why, amidst all those bloody whips, all that applause, the celebrations, trysts, arguments, laughter, I took the cue—I grasped the weightless hand shimmering in the gardens of dusk, and decided to board the train that stops in *Roma*.

Coda

In a moment we will meet, say hello, and smiling, for there is no better smile than what chance returns to us, we will pass through the words we give to one another. We will pass through the accent that tips on the apse of the fulcrum between never and always, leaving to judgment this presence that pearls on the page.

There is a fountain that silently silences silence, a fountain for mists that fall and continue to fall. And this fountain of fall, this falling fountain of silence, silently silencing silence, is the same fountain in the same place where the moment we meet flees.

I call this fountain *Roma*. You call it *Amor*.



Cycladic arch in the otherwise Byzantine cloud. Hardly a day goes by without setting fire to empty hours. This door hasn't opened in forty-three years. The wasps wrapped onto a beam in the damp interior of the night gaze at mirrors of mica. Where is the blood that stains December? She curls her feathers of fox fur and slips unseen from inviting cool shadows with a bit of beef between her teeth. I assume the worst. I take the temperature of a phantom word. The sky is cerulean yellow.

In the central square of a quiet section of the great solar city is a statue of Giordano Bruno, the 16th century philosopher burned by the Inquisition for heresy. Once, for several days and nights, I sat at the café there. Who was it who left that bouquet of white camellias, always fresh, at the base of the statue? And, no, I didn't want to meet him or her, merely to see who it was for whom the act sufficed. But I saw no one and still the bouquet appeared. Perhaps I slept, slipping into unconsciousness the moment the celebrant came into view; perhaps I believed I saw no one when in fact I was wrong. I doubt I will ever know. Does it matter all that much? Roma keeps for its own what it wishes just as we keep what we are not.

She's over there again, a blank stare, all that distraction suppressed beneath despair. She's got that cart and a paper hat. She's talking to herself. She stops and looks back at me. Goodbye. Goodbye!

Medea walks through Roma searching for lost children in hazy denial that they ever were hers. She lives under the bridge where water pools and spring mosquitoes bunch up on greasy flowers. She lives with dread that she whets on dreams.

She likes fucking, this Medea, she likes to get fucked.

And when she's had it, gagging with sperm, lean lost hands pull through her hair, and stifled screams bore holes in her heart.

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About the Author

Allan Graubard is a poet, writer, playwright and critic whose work has appeared in numerous venues in the United States and abroad, now in eleven languages. His books include *Fragments from nomad days*, *For Alejandra*, *Glimpses from a fleeing window*, and *Ascent of Sublime Love*. His plays have premiered in New York, Washington DC, Louisiana, and in Europe. He lives in New York with his wife, Caroline McGee



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