

Julia Carlson -- Two Poems

Your Letter

You wrote me
about a terrible storm
shaking the trees in the orchard
that even the leaves of the prune trees
shook in the wind
that caressed them
not like a mother
but like a torturer.

You wrote me
about the lighting that struck
the roof of the 300 year old barn
a noise as loud as a bomb
a noise that woke you from a deep sleep
and how the rain began
to soak the heads of the cows inside.

and how the cows had no courage
turning round and round
and how they mooed to each other
bellows that reminded you of Gregorian chants
like the Easter chanters in the church in Pau
where your father would be buried.

And you and your father
you went out into this torrent
this rain that was your enemy
its goal to drown the soybean fields,
the ripe fruits hanging on their branches,
and even you two, to ruin everything
that mattered to you both.

And me, in reading your letter,
so far away from you, in Boston,
I could not even imagine
that a barn could stand upright
for 300 years.

Moon, Waning (for my daughter)

What did I know?

Nothing, according to Juliette, this French peasant woman
always dressed in a black dress and apron.

You Americans, you're all lazy,
you don't know how to work,
you don't know any useful work,
you dress badly, you can't speak French
you're always butchering something.

My pregnant stomach, full swollen moon, ready to burst -

I was pregnant too, you know!

said Juliette, shaking her fist at me.

I worked in the fields all day, tended the garden,
washed, cooked, cleaned. Someone had to!

Her garden was blooming, peonies, dahlias
thick and fragrant, bees swimming in them,
the lawn cut, a thick green fur,
a pile of wood stacked off to one side,
a log and an axe nearby.

Juliette picked up the axe, handed it to me.

Take this! With both hands!

Placed an iron wedge in the center of the log.

See that? Take a good swing! Cut it in half!

What are you waiting for? Stop worrying!

Your baby won't even notice!

Axe held high over my shoulders,

I swung hard

watched as the log split in half,

realizing that soon, I too would be cleaved,

as this full moon I'd lived with all these months,

would suddenly wane

to make room for the new moon

my ever sweet daughter, You.

Julia Carlson attended Boston University (BA, Philosophy, & Masters, Social Work), and the University of Toulouse-le-Mirail, France, earning a Diploma in Linguistics. First Fiction Editor, Wilderness House Literary Review, and Editor, Bagel Bards Anthology V. Her work has been published in many small presses, including *Ibbetson Street*, *Muddy River Poetry Review*, *Nixes Mate Review*, *Poetry Super Highway*, *Wilderness House Literary Review*, *Sunday Poet*, & *Writing in a Woman's Voice* among others. She was awarded the Davis Kidd Poetry Award in 2001, and the PoetryKit Spring

Competition (UK), 2017. Author of two chapbooks, her first collection, *Prayer for the Misbegotten*, (Oddball Press) was published in 2017, and her second, *Little Creatures*, (Wilderness House Press) has just been released. Bilingual in French/English, Carlson is currently working on a collection in French; published herein are English translations of two poems from this manuscript.