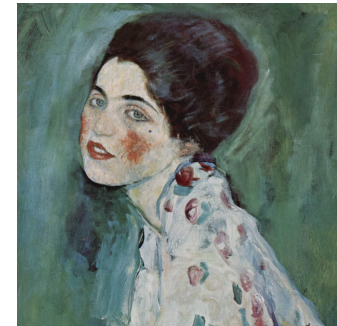
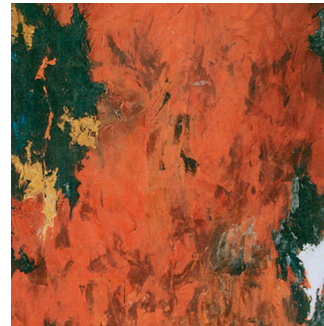
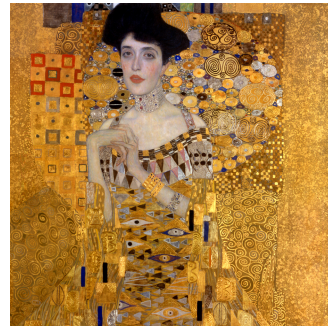


THEFTS AND FORGERIES



*a zine about art,
poetry, history,
and the beauty
of the untrue*



Pantheon Writers' Circle
Spring 2021

*I add my own love
to the history of people who have loved
beautiful things, and looked out for them, and pulled them from
the fire, and sought them when they were lost, and tried to preserve them and
save them while passing them along literally from hand to hand,
singing out brilliantly from the wreck of time
to the next generation of lovers,
and the next.*

REMBRANDT VAN RIJN



CHRIST IN THE STORM ON THE SEA OF GALILEE

Anchors aweigh! Long as we cling to ropes that bind.
My torment, my torture.
My torrential downpour.
My terror that stalks the night.
You there! Anyone who might be listening.
A hand, a god, a boy.
Any ear pierced against this howling wind.
Fight and flight, pitched wrong and right, an eye amidst the storm.
Though she howls and wails against the men who would have her.
She quiets and eddys for me.
One drop.
A drop to outweigh a ship, a frigate, a thousand sails.
Her translucent rage quiets.

*stolen from the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum
in 1990 & remains unrecovered*

Stolen! Rembrandt, storm on the Galilee
His only seascape.
His only escape.
Still missing.
Still free.
Silence! Release me, tranced on the gold list.
His only one who escaped.
Still clawing at the silent waves.
Scaffolding. Rediscovered, tricked not I. Greet him no longer.
She escaped the walker on water.
Still water.
Sometimes remembering seeks growling
Her growling effervescence
So. No water.
Simply no regret.
See a sunset
Some, with you.



And wrapped she is
In squares of light
All braced against the cold
I come to her by wake of night
The story long since told

We were at a party once and you pulled me into a side room
And said "surely I've never known as good a time as this"
And though I knew the victorian edge of speaking
Had a tendency of creeping in on the mouth of your voice when you were drunk
I reached my hand towards one of yours
Expecting only your usual icy-warm embrace
And was greeted instead by the gasp of air
Which passed between us as you shied away

Your dress was the color of the wall behind you
Though in billowing plume of satin you became translucent
A cloud of steam, damp and floating
And I, drenched to the skin in wanting,
Could not turn and watch you go

In the hot room you'd left I stood
And waited for my shoes to fill with dirt



G U S T A V
K L I M T



Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer I,

also known as

THE LADY IN GOLD

It's a story you've heard before,
Golden women in squares of night
Braced against the lore
I try to wrap them in swaths of light
But am swept away from shore

I was once at a beautiful party
Upscale, shimmering, the kind that leaves a victorian edge
of speaking on your lips for days
You leaned into me, brushed my mouth with a wine-stained finger
And told me you'd never known eyes quite like mine
I reached back, my lungs and legs and lips
needing another moment in your icy-warm gaze
I should've known you would turn translucent if I looked too long

I'm still waiting where you left me
Golden dust gathering in my wave-tossed hair
And golden dirt slowly consuming my expensive shoes
Although my fiance insists I had tea with him many years ago, and this morning

Looted by the Nazis in 1941, sixteen years after the death of Adele Bloch-Bauer. Returned to her niece, Maria Altmann, in 2004 after a prolonged legal battle with the Austrian government. Sold by Altmann to the Neue Galerie in New York City, where it is now housed.



CLYFFORD STILL

as forged by

PEI-SHEN QIAN



1.

they say you should burn a forest to promote new growth
a controlled burn, calculated, predictable
each lick of flame where its meant to be
but that doesnt stop the horror of the here and now
embers splitting and consuming
and when, as its meant to, a new tree grows,
it still feels the scars where it was ripped in two

2.

i kill birds with my gunpowder hands
my brush tortures trees, scars become embers anew
and it wont be the last time
but at least this once
my blood, mine, singes the edges
they wont tell you that on tours

Sold by the Knoedler Gallery in 2005 for \$4.3 million

1.

there are some pinecones that won't open until there's a fire
so that as their fathers begin to boil
in perfect rows of planned annihilation
their children will peek out for the first time
amid the safer, shorter world
and feast upon the ashes of their mothers with hungry roots

2.

i still see the skeletons behind my eyelids
and cant help but scratch them into the kitchen table
or the steering wheel or the red red paint
the paper-thin bark flutters higher
once again i have seen the thing that i should not
and i cannot look to see if it's watching back

GUSTAV KLIMT

PORTRAIT OF A LADY

She's green and she
crawled out of my computer
like she crawled out of the wall

it's hard work, her cheeks are flushed
exploded
burst; something like firecrackers and

there are some kinds of people you don't know why
but you'll do anything for. she's green and she's blue
and her reds are green and her whites are blue
and her hair fades misted
into the echoes of green sound

reverberating around her
like how i can hear my blood really well right now
twin tubes of high-frequency swishing

if I saw these greens in person i might die

maybe in person they don't look so cold kissing her
or maybe they freeze you when you walk by.

*Stolen from the Galleria Ricci Oddi
in Piacenza, Italy in 1997 &
found hidden in the gallery wall in 2019*



PAUL CÉZANNE



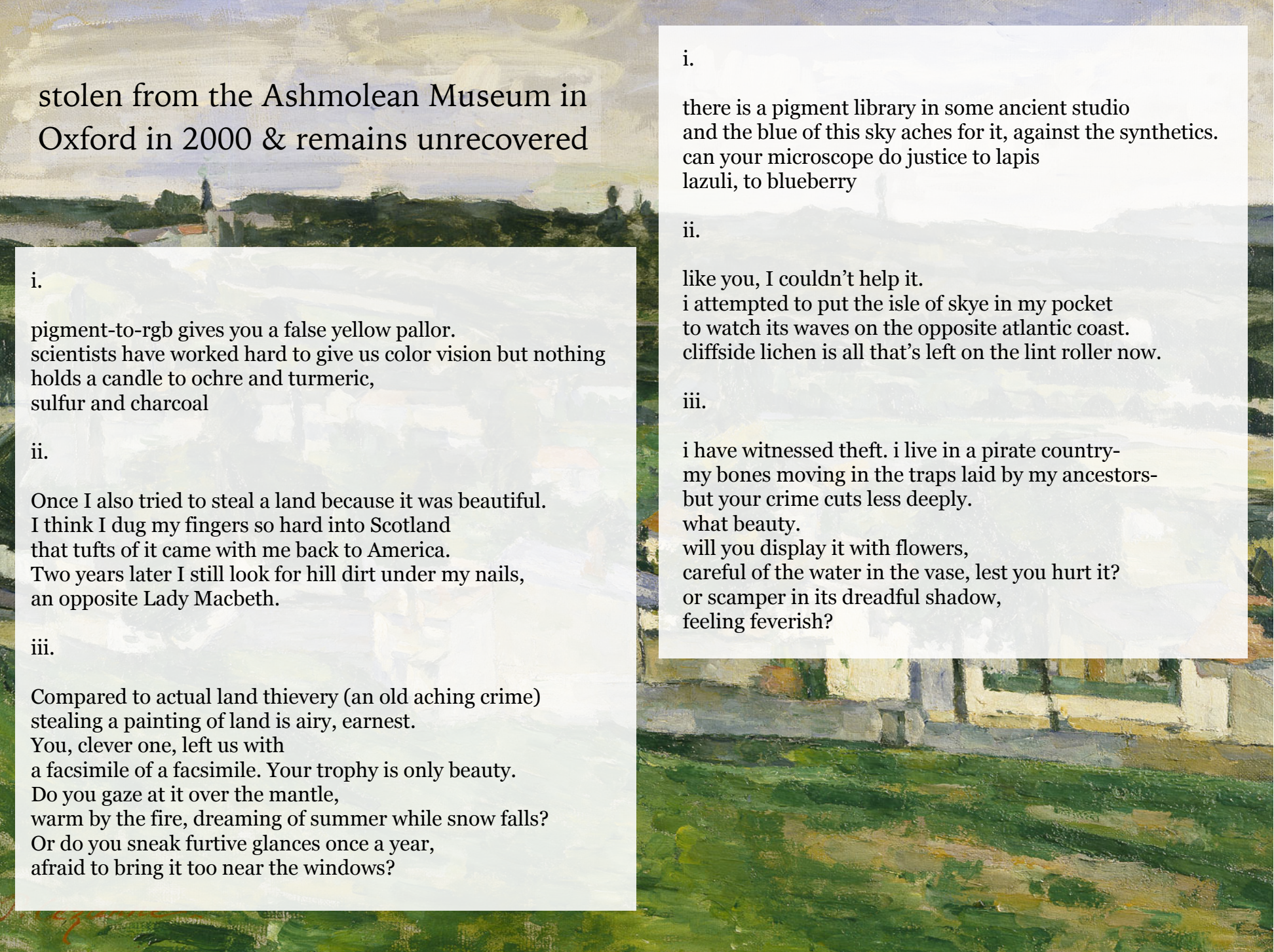
If I opened my mouth I would catch the wind like a sail
and lift me over the wind-tossed grass touching toe-tips to bending
heads heavy with seedpods
each stem bowing up and down like a

wave, wave, because I have never been so far from my mother.
She is in town, her head bobbing
through the crowds in the marketplace.
Sometimes loneliness is from being too close instead of too far.
Sometimes far fills you up instead like one of those
big things of soup, all the bits floating
vast and smudged with mysterious green lumps that blur in
with the cloudy broth or the thin saline horizon or what was I talking about?

I wish I could match my hand to the curve of the earth,
press palm to the tips of trees like the bristles on brushes, crush the town
to paper and cardstock.

I understand now why my mother still wishes I was small enough to carry on her back.

View of Auvers-sur-Oise



stolen from the Ashmolean Museum in
Oxford in 2000 & remains unrecovered

i.

pigment-to-rgb gives you a false yellow pallor.
scientists have worked hard to give us color vision but nothing
holds a candle to ochre and turmeric,
sulfur and charcoal

ii.

Once I also tried to steal a land because it was beautiful.
I think I dug my fingers so hard into Scotland
that tufts of it came with me back to America.
Two years later I still look for hill dirt under my nails,
an opposite Lady Macbeth.

iii.

Compared to actual land thievery (an old aching crime)
stealing a painting of land is airy, earnest.
You, clever one, left us with
a facsimile of a facsimile. Your trophy is only beauty.
Do you gaze at it over the mantle,
warm by the fire, dreaming of summer while snow falls?
Or do you sneak furtive glances once a year,
afraid to bring it too near the windows?

i.

there is a pigment library in some ancient studio
and the blue of this sky aches for it, against the synthetics.
can your microscope do justice to lapis
lazuli, to blueberry

ii.

like you, I couldn't help it.
i attempted to put the isle of skye in my pocket
to watch its waves on the opposite atlantic coast.
cliffside lichen is all that's left on the lint roller now.

iii.

i have witnessed theft. i live in a pirate country-
my bones moving in the traps laid by my ancestors-
but your crime cuts less deeply.
what beauty.
will you display it with flowers,
careful of the water in the vase, lest you hurt it?
or scamper in its dreadful shadow,
feeling feverish?

Vincent van Gogh



Poppy Flowers

i am eight years old and impatient,
impatient enough to
scrape my feet over the brick
walk in square du vert gallant park,
to imagine that i can see my sound
in the catacombs below,
to watch a man reproduce the mona lisa for a tourist,
oil brushes slick-wavering in his
paint-stained paint-water jar.
it is unusually warm in paris today
and this makes my impatience worse,
all tremble-trickly down my back.

i'm bored of sifting through skeleton
keys and old maps.
grandmother arches still,
low over a table of antique china,
close enough to bead her breath
on the lips of cups.

i tug on her skirt. please let's go home
and in the movement of her shadow
i glimpse yellow
below the table covering, moth-bitten.
something rolled up. someone's old cloth
just shiny enough that i remember the color
until the doors of the metro close,
sterile, & cold.

Stolen from Cairo's Mohamed Mahmoud Khalil Museum in 1977, recovered in 1987,



I find poppies at Cobb's Hill cemetery,
which is in the North End — a big clutter of headstones
tripping through the dry grass.

It's early spring, the crocuses just now blushing,
and I find yellow viscaria — sticky catchfly,
they call it — because it's so hungry —
and red poppies

blooming on the canvas of
an old man sitting in the headstones.
He's painting an old, long-lost thing:
a beautiful yellow moment, springtime trapped
in amber — and now gone forever.

The headstones are chipped like teeth.
He balances a jar of red
water on the head of a crumbling stone angel.
He paints as the sun disappears
into the cold bay, and he's still painting
when I have to get back on the train and
take the chilly ride home.

I like to think that when the old man goes home,
there's a bunch of yellow
catchfly and a few red poppies
living in a canvas on his wall —
that he's painting a masterpiece
he sees every day because he can't bear
to be without it

and because there's nothing more beautiful
than finding the first (brave, stubborn)
poppies of the year
glowing like the sunrise
where you least expect it.



stolen



again



in 2010



& remains



unrecovered

JOHANNES VERMEER

as forged by

HAN VAN MEEGEREN

You eye us through the rabble, your bulging gaze
like a fish, a cup of blood
at your fingers, the word of God
on your lips — you can see the future, can't you?
A sad, gaunt man withers under
imploring gazes —
under the weight of a history
still in motion. You will lead us like the sunrise
leads the day. Your body, like our bodies,
will crumple — no
bread in your skin, no wine to your
name — no resurrection

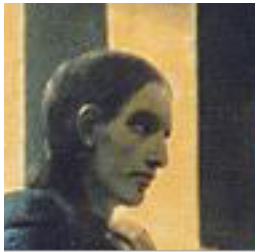
at the end of the stone tunnel.
You are the human heart — the beat
that orbits the Trinity — the truth at the center
of all this backstabbing
and worship.

You watch me like you know the truth
I want to hear. Please tell me.
I am looking at you through the telescope
of history, all the way back until
I find you in your saffron robes,
your sunken cheeks,
the look on your face as you
reckon with the pain and glory
of this man's indefinite future.

You are exactly who you say you are
and I'm listening.



THE LAST SUPPER



Stark stares slip past the memory,
Darkened, hollow eyes tear within my chest
The body is the author. Your blood in my palm.
Your word on my lips.

The Eucharist contaminates the eyes to the left
A young man hides under the table, trembling but convicted.

You will capture the spirit of the hardened hands, the stern shoulders, the crumpled body.
Resurrection abandons the skin. The touch is not enough like the bread.
A parable claws, but the traitor has already deceived your belief in a longsword.

I beg to hear but I cannot see through the telescope of the communion.
If I find you at the altar, will you accept me as the sacrifice? Or will you steal the pain
indefinable.

You are the author, I will read.



THE LAST SUPPER

For who or what finally is Rossetti anyway? He did not exist two hundred years ago and he does not exist today. We take it on faith that the man who made paintings that bear the initials DGR is the same man who is said to have taken chloral and to have slept with many women, to have kept exotic animals as pets and to have buried a manuscript of poems in the coffin of his wife Elizabeth, to have shared a house with George Meredith and to have tried to commit suicide, and so on, though none of these facts or a thousand others matter very much, and most of them could be attributed to any number of other human beings, living and dead.

How is any of the minutes, hours, and days of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's long-disappeared life of any significance to us when we are face to face with one of his works of art? It exists but he does not, and possibly he never did. Perhaps a hundred people conspired to invent him and merely inserted a fictional character into contemporary history in a consensual act of the imagination. That kind of invention is perfectly possible. It may even be the ultimate act of forgery.

After all there is nothing necessarily pure or sacrosanct about any of the evidence of a life lived. Our purest and fiercest moments may leave no traces. Our bodies themselves, obdurate and unconditional as they are, are temporary only. Eighty or ninety years of dreaming and learning are gone in an instant. Love itself perishes and time eats our bones.

Time ate Dante Gabriel Rossetti's bones too, if he ever had any. I do love those pictures someone made in his name.