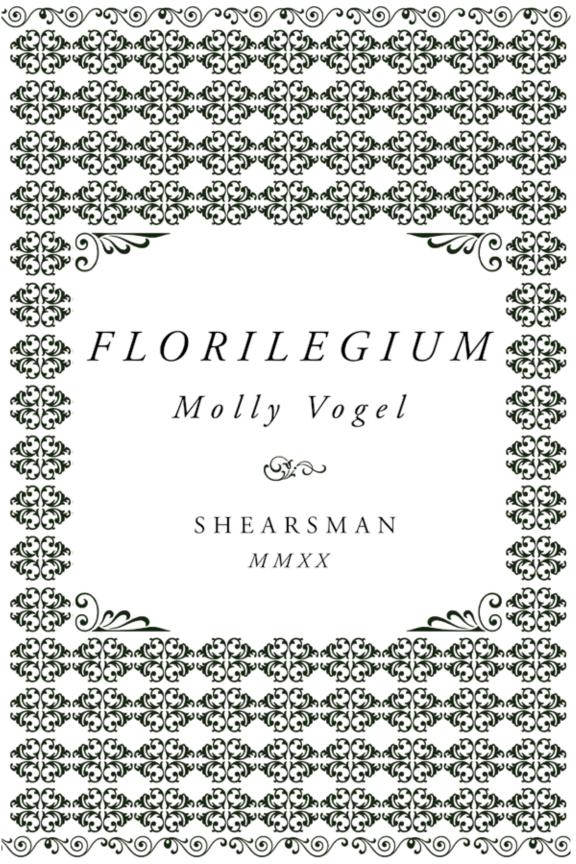
Florilegium



First published in the United Kingdom in 2020 by Shearsman Books Ltd PO Box 4239 Swindon SN3 9FN

Shearsman Books Ltd Registered Office 30–31 St. James Place, Mangotsfield, Bristol BS16 9JB (this address not for correspondence)

www.shearsman.com

ISBN 978-1-84861-702-5

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Cover design by Vanessa Romrell.

CONTENTS

I

The Gloaming / 13
The Lightening / 14
On Heidegger's Being and Time / 16
Elegy for Emma / 17
Light Iris, 1924 / 19
Snow Bunting / 21
Una Ursula / 22
Penny Wedding / 23
Ode to Neruda / 24
Flora and Fauna / 27
My Mother the Dishwasher / 29

II Metamorphosis

Interruption and Completion of a Thought / 33

The Artist Moved to Despair

at the Grandon of Antique Fragments / 34

Birdbook / 35

Bashō's Prefaces to the Novels of Henry James / 36 Verse-Riddles / 38

> Interludes / 39 Glasgow Haiku / 40 Some Definitions / 41

Listening to Scriabin for the First Time / 43

The Dog | 44

Colloquy with a Closed Window / 45

Sunday / 49

Danaë | 50

Antonyms / 53

Lot's Wife / 55

No Hay Olvido / 56

The Gallery / 58

Lorem Ipsum / 59

La Collectionneuse / 60

Oceanic / 62

Dies Natalis / 63

Lessons on How to Understand a Famous Painting / 64

Isle of Skye / 65

Schliesse mir die Augen beide | 66

Orchid / 69

The Child Dreaming in a Poet's House / 70

Stabat Mater /71

Glesga Prayer / 73

The Loves of Plants

GLOSSARY / 77

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS / 122

Every bird that sings, and every bud that blooms, does but remind me more of that garden unseen, awaiting the hand that tills it.

—Emily Dickinson

J'ai seulement fait ici un amas de fleurs étrangères, n'y

ayant fourni du mien que le filet à des lier.

I have gathered a posy of other men's flowers, and nothing but the thread that binds them is mine own.

—Michel de Montaigne

THE GLOAMING

Stepping lightly, the gloaming catches in the throat; thick tufts of wheat catch lightly. The song thrush calls

the day is ending. The scythe rests. Memory gleans east of the canal as father and son kneel in a field.

The alfalfa sends up their prayers as seeds in wind, in hushed succession. Brownie, the pony, watches stilly.

In a dream, he would see you in France, wounded, in a field of mustard. The dream thrice as a shutter on the heart. He did not know

it was your footing to blea for the lead to miss any poor soul. An oath between man and his God evels the field.

He knows you by your name. He sees the work, and deems it fine. The strands of wheat on the whetstone

are as the down of a babe—
the same hands work both with equal
discernment. You now dream of the redcurrant bush

—how you split it like the rood in pieces across the yard, little garnets come spring, and mother in her apron pleased

—that we are more than the sum of our parts. Body grafted to spirit and you—to Margaret.

THE LIGHTENING

The place where the mind goes in grief, I am led invisibly to summers in Meadow Vista,

minnows clustered on the lake— Margaret takes my hand to the blackberry bush.

In childish instancy, I do not see the thorns, only deep garnets. We climb a ladder

to the highest bramble. We sneak several in our mouths. And later-

jam with the same hand.

What urgency is God's work (who will plant the daffod's next spring?)

—the burgundy petals of each dahlia catch the light, the sum of these days

is reticent. Flower heads nod soundless in the wind the birds song soundless—

Margaret, with whom I share a name, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands—with blackberry juice
—with needle and thread
—with child.

Now, what is left but quiet presence in time, the leaf turns, a deer

crosses the blue-oak forest, like light you can step in and out of.

ON HEIDEGGER'S BEING AND TIME

T

When I was fourteen, I wanted to play the violin. I did not have the discipline of my twin, her feet dragging before her eyes down each stair early before seminary each morning. My Mom would accompany her on the piano, a remnant from girlhood that came before books and boys. Vanessa would play while she thought, and Mom thought I slept upstairs.

I was listening: a book by my bedside and my black lab asleep

I was listening: a book by my bedside and my black lab asleep with me in my twin bed.

Now, I would hear Mother say. It is time, *now* is the time. Everyone is waiting for you. Your siblings are waiting for you in the car. God is waiting for you, too.

II

The metronome tsks time. It is the telling of the *now*, *now*, *now*, *now*. It is the quiet form the before, the clamor of what is to come four equally stressed sixteenths. The details deliberate, the need for discipline in the disparate. The phrasing of it all, time being robbed from one note to another. There is refuge in order. The absoluteness of a thing holding time, holding time in time. It is pointing to *now*, no, *now*, though the tick-tick sound has come and gone before it has come.

III

Listen: one can only wait for nothing and nothing waits for no one. I know nothing and know no end.

ELEGY FOR EMMA

Ι

Today I pass the time plucking oranges from your tree, dropping them one by one into a trash bin with a hole in the bottom.

I walk through your house breathing the bitter scent of it and leave its letters falling into a bowl on your table

It feels like a dream: the skin of the fruit in my hand, the slivers of half-motaking shape in my mouth and still (so late in the season) there is fruit on the trees.

П

I stand in the silence of your kitchen, the cupboards empty, their contents growing tired in a brown box: olive green plates from your wedding, a rusted silver spoon, derby cups from 1951, a wine glass, and a clock without the time.

You didn't drink
I say to no one.
And I didn't know you liked horses.

A painting of some Bolshevik village rests clumsily off its hook next to a photo of a nameless couple. I ask mom who that woman is. She says your grandmother. It is her wedding day and even in the black and white, in the shadows of her lace collar, the folds of her dress, in the creases of her darkly lined eyes and lips, her face drifts to the surface a budding lily.

LIGHT IRIS, 1924

Georgia O'Keeffe, water colour

I

Your slender limbs grow, only when planted. Your slender limbs, growing.

I want to grow with you, to entwine with your roots

in dark unfurling over and over me. MRIER

Π

When I want to be myself, I hide; put my ha

in pockets or learn to love my body softly, sometimes

touching, imposing on everything and nothing.

Ш

I want to feel skin. I want to feel the skin of skin. I branch my fingers, spread them thin, nesting in the small of your back. I want to nest. In you,

I am planted; your petal, your pollen, I would like to be.

IV
I feel the weight of hands carrying a plant that never blooms.

SNOW BUNTING

When I plucked you from your aerie that was *leave in the wind*. Someone must have entered an empty room.

The walls spit feathers. We did not reach the long and low sleep of martyrs.

Since despair is my forsaker, and you my keeper, I confess (mea maxima culpa). For your part

in this sorry slip of hearts, you should sit on Càrn Dearg aone. For mine, I will keep company with excess

out on the bird-short our rapine bodies fore in their longings.

The grey day's aria hums through our wrinkled bones.