

MATTHEW ZAPRUDER

Poem for a Vial of Nameless Perfume

Finally stranger at the end of a long season
of constant beginnings I opened at last
the letter containing tissue paper
so carefully folded around the vial you sent me.
With giant fingers I unscrewed the black
cap marveling at such jeweled industry.
The clear liquid smelled at first
like a vast tiny ballroom full of hopes
someone else's mother had
rubbing one wrist against another
in that manner reserved for distracted
excited ready to be disappointed realists
who know for a moment all dreams matter.
I bent my head to the glass jar
and knew it was the same scent worn
by the woman staring out
of the gilded framed canvas at me
yesterday at the modern museum.
She was lying on a red realistic
yet also somehow along the edges
disintegrating couch. She must have been
at the very last party before painters
discovered abstraction and started painting
the multicolored edge of this wondrous
contaminated storm cloud age we find
ourselves alone together drinking
so much information from,
while the keepers of the house
we have not elected discuss just war
and our server farms sound like the ultimate
bee colony touching ceremoniously

down on a field of magenta flowers.
And now the third and therefore
most holy time I bring it to my face,
searching for some actual connection
to any unsentient genus my nose
could bring my brain, but there
was nothing, no gentle stroke
of the orphan forehead, no memory
of summer walking along the beach
still holding a few dried crumbling
leaves from the fragrant grove,
only the thought because I am actually
on a typewriter typing on a ghostly
anachronistic piece of paper
I will physically send you
to truly hold, a few molecules
once part of me to your ceiling
or who knows if we are both lucky
skylight will rise, and then
an electric wheelchair through
the green space inside you
from now on everyone will know
as Emerald Park will quietly carry
a dreaming young soldier,
the room will get sadder, you will be
on an island with very long night
approaching and clouds will pass
over your head and no one will ever
know what they resembled.