



Photos by Paula Mazur, Dallas, 1976.

Endless

Poems by Jane Saginaw

An introduction by the author is published online at athenaeumreview.org/essay/endless

1.

Endless

She tried to convince me—
Warm Springs was like
a private Georgian resort
really, nothing like
a rehabilitation hospital

I watched her pin-pointed pupils pulse

Often, she reminded me—
Roosevelt's lover lived
in the little white house beneath
the shady pines

I noticed how she lifted her chin, faintly flared her nostrils

But it was when she insisted
my grandmother took perfect care
of my older brother, her newborn, who she abandoned
in Detroit, that my mother's weak smile sunk my heart—

Daughter-love blossomed in my chest
as I studied the tips of my fingers
It wasn't stories of polio
that paralyzed the beating of my heart

Not her fancy images, but my own disturbances that swelled.

As if she believed words contained her stories.

As if the mark at the end of this line halts your thoughts.

2.

Songbirds, 1969

Fifteen years old when my mother announced
I'd like to take you to Warm Springs

Rusty orange dirt, screen doors sprung open with a tap
I studied silent songbirds in the courtyard

Magnolia blooms guarded crisscrossed sidewalks
rolling paths really, crossroads

Gliding through waxed linoleum hallways
to the corset shop and brace shop and physiotherapist office

We squared our shoulders in unison
No buildings with stairs, no doctors with answers

My mother's wedding band clicked
against her wheelchair's rim

And my walking legs stumbled—
Not my polio, hers

But my thighs still twitch, torque
when I remember the rust-colored soil

Perhaps the sidewalks never crossed
Maybe the songbirds cried

Echocardiogram, 1999

rare beauty descends
blends with pulsing neon spheres
of open-flutter orange-yellow-red swells

a cool jelly-tipped probe tickles
my bare flesh exposed—who knows
sources of my congenital click?

swishes and gushes,
blood rushes back towards open-valves, flapping gaps
and skipping beats

mystery peeks, swoops deep, dervishly whirls
stretched too far—a loose chord's sweet grief bursts now
with dangerous daughter-love





4.

Seder, 2020

we parsley together
internet-cross-stitched tablecloth
hard-boiled, shank-boned

chanting questions
this night of difference
Why? How long? Where

is our leader? In this wildness
afflicted us then, consumes us now

matza cracks, wine dribbles the rim
of this plague—our shoulders curl,
longing for the cucumbers of egypt, we sing:

enough! terrified! no structure! abandoned!
ritual, small changes, learn bridge,
vulnerable- raw- huddled alone-
useful/useless humbled/dissolved
(reframe) (draw circles) (let go)
accelerate— on hold— on-the-cusp-of-something-rare—

Morning Love Poem

Before rice cakes and sunflower butter,
 Before espresso and news of the day,
 I slide open the door to our terrace, and

I stand and I breathe and I gaze. Tangerine glow or
 Milky-thick fog. Grey whips of cirrus or drizzle.
 Those lights to the east (Mesquite or Balch Springs?)

Revealed or obscured today? No river overrunning
 Its rim. No ah-ha revelations to bare. But I welcome the
 Rhythm of the morning. Beating, exquisite and rare.

Rare air. Rare blossom of sky. Rare circling centers of darkness to light. Rare
 deepest pockets of heliotrope horizon. Rare elusive dew on this metal rail. Rare
 fractured sparks of sun. Rare this glorious daybreak. So rare, that heavens calls.
 Rarer, I think, that I answer. Rare, just the inhale. Rare knowing we are safe, we
 are safe. Rare lavender scent, like the lather of our soap. Rare the muscles in my
 face, so slack. Rare notice of that crane's distant call. Such rare openness. A rare
 pattern to that flashing red light; does it blink to the beating of my heart? Rare
 question, I believe. Rare, repetition, repeating. Rare silkiest kiss of this morning.
 Rare, you teasing wind. Rare, us, under our quilt, just moments ago. Rare, vivid,
 so vivid and rare. Rare wonder when I fill my lungs. Rare, the ecstatic exhale.
 Rare your delicious joy. As rare as my rare zeal.

Not an answer for the pangs of our aching moments.
 Mysterious, the puzzlements we share. And then we return
 to the rhythm of our morning. Our container, crafted, with immaculate care.