

PEGGY AYLSWORTH

The Impossible Possible

At the present moment
there is no hippopotamus in the room,
said the philosophy professor.
When challenged, it was hard for him to prove.
Especially in the light of Heraclitus:
“We are and we are not.” Try the trick
of turn the tables. Let them thrash it out.
After all, his wife was pregnant
with their seventh child and Heaven
had not sent him fortune. It wasn’t like
McCourt in bed with Angela’s ashes, and the fleas.
One man’s misery could not provide an antidote.
Now, this other problem, too far beyond
the realm of logic. It began as only a bit on the side.
How should he plead? Innocent, with time off
for bad behavior? It’s true, the summer
sang in him a little while, but then a cup became a cup...
though nothing could be certain. It well may be
that a hippopotamus has taken residence
in this lecture room.

City at the Edge of the Poem

Behind the iron fence, a purple rose.
I bend to it and inhale, city mammal
adrift among the billboards.
A tomcat, black stripe along his spine
is mewling, padded feet too long accustomed
to the cracked cement. He gave up the wild
for palaces and cushions. I stroke
his back. He strikes with open claws...
“The hot of him is purest in the heart.”

How the city goes untamed. Towers
rise and crumble. The jar has fallen
from the hill in Tennessee.