

GRETCHEN MARQUETTE

Not Reading Lorca on Grand Avenue

For seven days I've left you
on the White Star Line—
same length of time as passage to New York.
I don't know why I left, you say.
I ask myself a hundred times a day.
I too look over my shoulder,
feel blood in my neck, taste
salt. People say sorrow consumes,
but I feel huge—like a flame, and grief
a strong breath. I walk around
with my throat on fire, my arm a branch
of singed buds. I've missed you
these seven days, our stories halted.

I saw a film about Altamira, caves
in Spain, paintings on their ceilings.
A child found them, *Maria*, she was
born the same year as your mother.
I keep going back to the frankness
of numbers, and what *eighty* is
if we mean years. It doesn't help
to answer: Of she and I,
who is closer to you?

Two golden dogs cross Grand Avenue
following a woman. They lie down
and wait when she enters the café.
One dog, the one with black ears, studies me
through the glass. He's the first today to see
I'm a burning tree. It makes him thirsty
to look at me. People float past, this the first
warm day of spring. They seemed surprised
to see leashless, golden dogs lying
like dragons over dark paws. Even this

has something to do with grief, with paintings
of saffron and yolk-colored bulls. I want
to keep you on a ship, in your berth,
its porthole open to air laced with salt.
I haven't been as good as I could've been.
I've made so many mistakes. On the day you died,
wine glasses were loaded into crates.
The world keeps filling with places
you will never put your mouth.