

Voltairine de Cleyre at St. John's · *Mark Halperin*

It is December, the prairie broad and buried;
last night I saw the moon on all that white.

There must be nothing in me to slow the flood—
even the black dog that sat down by me
in Brooks Street comes back:
how he wanted to lie in my lap,
how I carried him upstairs,

the awful gulp when he stiffened.

And the little Sister who kissed me
when the others frowned—she has a piece
I wrote for her and sometimes reads it over.

I judge my life wretched
but the Haymarket comrades
who bowed to no God,
believed in no here-after
went triumphantly to the gallows. So.

I walk about and dust as I promised,
three snubs of lead in me.
The poor boy who fired them
did less harm than my body, at forty-three

so weak I hear a roaring train
passing a window, but inside
my head, as in an empty hall.

When I stopped in Port Huron on my way here
it seemed the mill had gone backward: discouraged
piles of lumber leaning and rank weeds
to the rotting backwater.
The old convent is sold for apartments.

Mother is sure to be miserable once I pack.

Berkman has written: his book does not go.
I have answered, lie on the grass,
watch the ants—let the sun burn
into you day after day
until the thoughts fill you again;
but I fail to convince myself.

I get hold of a thought. In a few days
it appears foolish.
Then another crops up, then it goes smash.