



## Monet Refuses The Operation, by Lisel Mueller

Doctor, you say there are no haloes  
around the streetlights in Paris  
and what I see is an aberration  
caused by old age, an affliction.  
I tell you it has taken me all my life  
to arrive at the vision of gas lamps as angels,  
to soften and blur and finally banish  
the edges you regret I don't see,  
to learn that the line I called the horizon  
does not exist and sky and water,  
so long apart, are the same state of being.

Fifty-four years before I could see  
Rouen cathedral is built  
of parallel shafts of sun,  
and now you want to restore  
my youthful errors: fixed  
notions of top and bottom,  
the illusion of three-dimensional space,  
wisteria separate  
from the bridge it covers.

What can I say to convince you  
the Houses of Parliament dissolves  
night after night to become  
the fluid dream of the Thames?  
I will not return to a universe  
of objects that don't know each other,  
as if islands were not the lost children  
of one great continent. The world  
is flux, and light becomes what it touches,  
becomes water, lilies on water,  
above and below water,  
becomes lilac and mauve and yellow  
and white and cerulean lamps,  
small fists passing sunlight  
so quickly to one another  
that it would take long, streaming hair  
inside my brush to catch it.

To paint the speed of light!  
Our weighted shapes, these verticals,  
burn to mix with air  
and change our bones, skin, clothes  
to gases. Doctor,

if only you could seeÂ  
how heaven pulls earth into its armsÂ  
and how infinitelyÂ theÂ heart expandsÂ  
to claim this world, blue vapor without end.

---

*Published at [www.awakin.org](http://www.awakin.org) on Oct 14, 2019*