

## Robert Gibbons

### TO BREATHE THE LEAST BIT OF FRESH AIR

On the fifth day of summer in the middle of the afternoon under a stone lion sweating the last of its magma steam the young woman from Martinique eased into shadows of buildings as if they were the shade of trees, then disappeared before northern eyes. The tailor of the men's clothing store, Ari, stepped out for a moment with a thread on his pants, a thread on his jacket, which he began to remove, both threads spinning him around until, ultimately, he must have stood there on the sidewalk, naked & cool. The woman reappeared out of the brick, out of the granite in her dress of blue water. In the parking lot of Il Panino a waiter left orange peels on the hood of his Volvo, while talking with two women, adding a sense of green absent from the pavement. Yet amid all this Peace, this collection of habits from home, the harsh reality of trouble underground haunted my vision, when back on the subway where four Jewish kids with tennis rackets strewn all over the car floor talked in front of a man reading the Koran, the man reserving an extra seat for the Koran, & glances of hate tossed at the boy in the yarmulke, which I witnessed when he tried to stare me down but my eyes wouldn't lower, & all three Gods, adamant in the corner of the car couldn't devise a way to breathe the least bit of fresh air into a sticky political situation.

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## WOMAN IN FRENZY

Two scientists over a bottle of Dao at a café in Portugal near the site of an ancient Roman ruin. After a while the geologist mentions a fault running under the site of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi. No such fault argues the archaeologist. The geologist quotes two fairly creditable witnesses, Plutarch & Strabo, about the presence of fumes. Oracle always woman. Woman in frenzy answering petitioners' questions. Warm waters rising from the deep Kerna spring strike the little cleft of limestone bitumen releasing chemicals into Temple ground waters. Red wine in Portugal flowing like the Douro. A petrochemical called ethylene once used in anesthesia produces disembodied euphoria below the great Omphalos of the world. Utterance rises out of Time cut in earth. However man interprets it, she's correct.