



Cliff Walk at Pourville, by Claude Monet

For this newsletter, we have a special image of Monet's Cliff Walk at Pourville, and a poem entitled, *Monet at Normandy, The Cliff Walk Pourville*. This was sent to me in a wonderful email and I was impressed by how the poem captures the essence of the natural beauty of that place and how the writer honors the Ekphrasis form notably. The writer uses the inherent tension between describing the image through the "gaze" and being part of it. I couldn't wait to share it with all of you here as a preview to our current **Invite to Write**.

Monet at Normandy, The Cliff Walk Pourville
by Eldon Beck

what do they see
two young women
in wind-whipped white
dress draped with grey

midst golden turmoil of flowers and grasses
on the sheer bluff above
the white capped sea

what do I see
hiding in splashes of paint
within the joy of creation
a vision that compels
feel the wind, smell the salty air, see/sea forever
wildness invades
stirs the garden inside me
arouses
memoires of Viking past
mind and soul fly free

how does paint
on canvas
touch so deeply
cause a search through crowded years
connect
to my past and future
bask
in this moment

In our continued journey through the Portal and in writing and appreciating poetry, I often reflect on the guidance of my teachers and mentors. Like any art form, poems that inspire and speak to us can be quite subjective, yet, there are those lines in poems that have a universal quality, poems that touch us all. The qualities of poetry that have this appeal often show the craft of word song by expressing what the writer sees. At the same time, poems that illuminate some subtle essence of the writer's emotion or psyche have great appeal, as we can feel that energy. This poem is also noteworthy because it has two vital attributes that my teachers encourage: the use of simple words that provide enough space to draw us to deeper places, and the sound of the poem, when read aloud, flows from the lips like a song. There are some wonderful lines in this poem that demonstrate these points:

***two women
in wind-whipped white
dresses draped with grey***

When read aloud these lines give an echo that great poems resonate from the soul. The use of alliteration in poetry is tricky, but he pulls it off.

Then we have the invitation in the line:

feel the wind, smell the salty air, and see/sea forever

This invitation brings us into the poem, but also into greater intimacy with the writer which comes after the juxtaposition of what the women see and what he sees. The sea-like ebb and flow of his verse from the outer to the inner place, is a subtle but most effective and lovely construct.

***wildness invades
stirs the garden inside me
arouses
memories of Viking past***

The use of the one-word line "arouses" is poignant, well-placed and adds to motion, the sway and then the rest or pause that is natural to a poem's breath. I love those lines and entering the garden in poetry is always an adventure and this invitation does not disappoint with its hint of the warrior archetype.

When we come to the "turn" in the last stanza, which is given in a reflective question, the same wavy sea motion brings us back from the past to the future, from the inner to the outer. The second to the last sentence ending with a one-word line, is sublime to the place and intimate proximity between the poem and image.

Now—it is our turn to walk the cliffs of Pourville. We send this Invite to Write with hopes that you too will bask in the scenery. I look forward to reading your poems!

Grazie Dolce,

Ellen Liberatori

Here are some of the submissions from our fourth Invite to Write inspired by the following image by Claude Monet:

Captured
(after Claude Monet)

You may ask how they got there in the wind;
how they walked through prickly gorse
and wild heather that purpled damp hems,
up to the cliff edge where a slip of the brush
could have tipped them over onto

a frothy sea. Instead, they are held corseted

by a Master's steady hand, preserved
under a parasol of orange that the wind
will never be able to catch.

- Valerie Morton

The moment after the painting: Claude Monet's *Cliff Walk at
Pourville*

for Gisela

Only the impressionists pursued the instant for the instant's sake.

- John Rewald

*Another way of thinking about the stillness of an artwork, however,
is to unlock that fixity and to imagine what happens next.*

- Stephen Cheeke

1

It was the sort of afternoon that could easily tempt you
into the seductions of clichés or truisms
about the light, the colour of the grass, the sea's rough curl;
in truth, a day beyond the capacity of words.

I caught sight of two young women strolling the cliff edge path;
they stopped behind a knoll – for safety's sake, I supposed.

Some way back from the path and the cliffs' edge,
a man with a dark beard and beret sat behind an easel
daubing the scene in sumptuously thick pigments,
the day's movements of sea and cloud, wind and sail
palpable in the impasto brushwork's rhythms.

The young women, the taller one
with a poppy-red parasol protecting her fair skin
against the wind's bluster, stood staring out to sea,
though what they saw I could not tell; perhaps
it was the clouds congregating on the horizon
promising a storm, even a last glimpse of Europa
borne away by Zeus or Poseidon's white bull emerging
from the choppy mythic waves. I couldn't see.

2

Every moment harbours a flotilla of the unexpected
poised to breach the boundaries between land and now,
sea and eternity, between earth and sky, part and whole.

The man continued painting, engrossed in the instant,
although he looked up cantankerously as I passed;
the daubs and blotches of paint assumed

the vernacular of the impeccable moment
fixed firmly on the silent canvas;
up close, nothing was recognisable.

The young women embraced for some moments
like dear friends or sisters even
relishing the day's intense delights; then
they stepped to the top of the knoll,
perhaps the view was better if more hazardous
there the gusting wind whisked the parasol away
or did I see the woman let it go deliberately?
There was an almost audible ruffling of skirts
as they stepped lightly over the cliff's edge.

3
years later, at an exhibition, I saw the painter
had chosen to preserve the moment before;
but my memory refuses to loosen its grasp
on the moment
after

- Tony Ullyatt

To the Edge

What was it that enticed
these willowy women
to the edge
of that seaside cliff at Pourville?

Perching like two lush wildflowers,
freshly plucked from
the surrounding soil that sheltered them,
they bend toward
the blue open space,
ignoring the resolute wind
that binds their sinuous skirts.

Below on restless waves,
the busy boats
rock in rhythm,
as if attuned to
the beating hearts above.

Just then, I wonder:
Might these two Graces

allow me to join them,
If only
to inhale the lingering scent--
the potpourri of fish scales, salt air, and sea lavender--
If only
to remember
this one supple moment.

- Karen D. Benson

THE EDGE

Her laugh was a quick cry --
 sounding
 to me
like a grassy cliff
on a hot day, breaking
without warning --

the drop
echoing back
 from the sea

- E.E. Nobbs

Looking at the painting I went inside
 In anticipation
 I see myself in the cliff walk of life.
Fish eye heart to heart in all mind body spirit
 Came alive

- Lera Welch