The letter is already bandaged, 
cuts and pastes of phrases, plasters 
of characters, greenstick words, broken 
to mend. Still delete, still return, 
sometimes only the repeating eye 
of the ellipsis. The words we can 
ever bring to key. What message 
after the refrain of silence?

What to say to the way we lost 
each other, locked in that not 
wanting to go forward and still wanting 
one another? Then: it was the young 
necessity of leaving. How we fixed 
a self to that point, everything 
appearing to move. Only we anchor 
us back, insist all is progress. 
Time: the concrete zephyr.

There is no punctuation 
for the nightmares, how I reach 
for him in sleep, or how he passes 
is index finger in repeated regret 
wearing the watchband to thin. 
My gift. As if to rub out time. 
As if, by touch, to stop it.

Is there a comma that bears 
the years, a period that will rise 
as monument to the inked 
puncture of absence?
How I whisper letters to him
in the cover of night, how his mouth
returns my name in prayer. The flagrance
of exclamation points, the parenthesis
that strain to raise their locks
after seventeen years.

Maybe we justify the text.

Maybe only the question
marks.
The Persistence of Want

Julie E. Bloemeke

When we meet and I open
the book of us, there
must be an eye for fire:

all the things written before
the smallness of us: composed,
sexed, painted, bled into being,
talked into creation, like,

that at last, there is your pulse
wishing against me, your arms
taking me, the willingness
of geography closed. I write this

poem under every day, scenarios
scratched and crossed into existence,
destruction: how we leave and never
return, the restraint, the volatile,
the never meet, us both alone

in different countries, as it should be.
I turn my prized sphere of story for comfort,
tension, lust, nostalgia, to relive and invent
you in the words because here

you don’t go, we keep each other, we
can change the possible with every letter.

But what if, in the wounded reckless
skin of you, pressed to the wounded
reckless skin of me, there is the (un)lock?
In our imagined met: no more why
or what if, only the frayed

human shirt, your edge so close to my
eye, the vision made touch, and too
this will go into memory, interpretation,
story. But I only want this impossible
present, the space of us fissured in a space,  
the nervous anticipatory ricochet of heart  
so near to heart, the nonwords bleeding  
through us, our faulty thoughts, our errant  
bodies, the commitments we hold and question.

There is only the implosion,  
your face setting over mine, the relief  
of prayer made flesh. We can break  
the spell of water. We brought our bodies  
together again. And our faces close distance,  
time. And in the second before we seal this, kiss

that almost kiss, the tainted moment  
where I want every button undone,  
the swim of our bodies back, where you too  
can think only of the fall of break,  
the feel of us, on, in each other,

I want us both somehow  
to do the inconceivable: to willingly  
pull back, to choose to create  
some altered love where all of these marriages

we have made keep us and we let them,  
where even in our devastating bodies  
we choose higher, we stay at embrace.
Gospel of Text, Books I–IV

Julie E. Bloemeke

I: Cell Correspondence

I touch you
in the privacy
of my hand.
You slide,
unlock
me in yours.

I have not seen how
you look at me,
our eyes unmet
for decades now.

You even carry me
in your pocket,
the one over
your heart,
the one lower
than your hip.

It is how we build
the membrane,
body ourselves
into each other:

I am your creation.
You are mine.

The walled envelope
of truth: we risk
no
exposure

living in the sent cells
of our messages.
II: After Weeks of Silence You Text Me One Photo Without Words

It contains this:

- lake
- waves
- three mountains
- clouds
- polished sky
- two birds
- an edge
- a shore
- crossing

And the outline
of your body
over it all.

It is how you see a landscape:
vast, inevitable.

No it isn’t.

It is a photograph
of how you miss me.

III: Text Confession Sans Sphallolalia

It happens
when we take
the memory of us
into present
tense,
when in
real
real?
time
your words appear
as pinpoint selves:

kiss touch taste
and, curious,
I don’t say stop
I say please
I say Oh God
which can mean
so many ways
I touch
the map
of your name
resting over
my heart
line
these letter
squares
we call keys
and I wait
for the beat
of your dots
small tongued
circles pulsing
in the pause
which means
you are giving

me
more  more
my eyes open
my body charged
to the press
your sealed thoughts
unzipped
after decades

all of our carefulness
lost
to touch
to text
in my hands
your long-revealed prayer:

you too want

our bodies wired
as one.
IV: Picture from Bed

You text:
_Send me?

This means:
_Send me a picture.

I am in bed alone. You too.
You want me captured, now
when we are slightly
drunk, able to think of touch.

For once, I do not pause over
the small curve of darkness
under my eyes.

I snap immediately.

I do this
not for the photo
I won’t send,

but because
I want to be
the last question

before you fall
asleep.
E-mail from Museo Correr

Julie E. Bloemeke

I

You are in Venice, everywhere the shift
of tide. Some scenes I conjure myself, releasing
my version from its pages. Others you create
for me: the flight of pigeons, their expectant eyes,
an adagio lifting through San Marcos. Even the sun
grabs the columns as if to stop itself.

And after this paragraph: sudden space.
You scumble, mention you are wearing sunglasses,
though now it’s almost night. That you ordered
a glass of the Soave I told you I dreamed
of one day drinking. That you are holding
the screen in your hands, barely
able to read. You tell me you try to type,
but the tears are merciless. At first
I think you say this for the beauty
of Venice. Or because you are walking
the wish. Then I think—selfishly—maybe
it is because of me, or us, though I do not say it.

I am sitting in the pine forest alone
as I read this. Thank God I am.
Two years we have been writing—art, books,
travel—never a mention of our past, of an
us, never a cross into the intimate. But here
in the city of water, bridges, you reveal
the glass truth, the unexpected text
no letter could prepare us for:
Your marriage is over.

The strings in me snap, I buckle
into the needles, all of their spines
breaking against me. How to navigate an ocean?
Because now all I want is to reach you,
to do what I once knew best: to save you
with my body, to steal for a moment
what I should not. But I am left
with a pulsing cursor, a tainted screen,
the need to share when I can only offer:
I write faith, pray that my words
will somehow light any candle
within you. I tell you there is a chapel:
San Giacomo dell’Orio. You promise
to find it. I send, sick with words
that cannot save a thing.

II

As my words depart, yours arrive. Our crossing
in the ether. Another message: *What I did not say
was why I am telling you this now.*
*It was the painting. Antibes is here. Our Monet.*
At first, I cannot make sense, think
you are using metaphor, but no.
The painting—our painting—
is in Venice, on leave from Toledo.

And my hands cover my face and I am back,
further into our younger, unstained selves,
the two of us holding each other before that daubed
precipice, glittering toward the city, to Côte d’Azur,
how we vowed one day we would see it all together.

Neither of us have been to the painting since.
And now, you spell more: it has its own wall
in the Museo Correr. As if waiting for this, or us.

III

It is the questions that open now, the way I press
my fingernails into my palm until I anchor
myself back in. It is the way you type
a word, only to pause and touch the mole
I once vowed myself into, claiming my space
on your body. The place I kissed that last day
before we drowned for seventeen years of silence.

And now you walk the streets, their narrow veins,
bloodless as you move through them. You have
dinner alone, looking to the Rialto as the sun collapses,
as you will me to walk over, without a word,
to give my body as lightning or escape, as anything
that will close the pain.

All of this you can never say, and never will,
out of respect or deference or secret I cannot know.
Instead you hang our landscape in the gallery
of hope, trusting in all that seems to remain.
On the Underground

Julie E. Bloemeke

Sated by London, we ride the Tube
back to Bank, you in your indigo
tie, my anniversary present
already loosening its knot.

Our children are an ocean away.
We are able to love our quiet love.
Content, you take my hand, sigh in to me.
We hold this gaze until I become sleepy,
turn to rest my head on your shoulder.

Eighteen years. I smile to myself.
Today we did not have to argue
over the bills. I did not have to pull
your socks from the bed. Again. We
even shared an orange. Across the way

I become distracted by her short black boots,
zippers traversing her ankle, glittering
tracks to her toes. Yes, I think, to have
those teeth. Golden too. I follow her body
to shadow stockings, leather skirt, higher

still to leopard scarf, raven bob,
the bright surprise of her lips, red
in the dark of these tunnels. Her ears,
beaded to headphones, unknown music.

Looking out the passing glass,
she glances down, sees our hands.
Her face registers, softens. She does not see

that I see. I watch how she loses her body,
her edges. I loosen my fingers, slide them
under my scarf. I know this look,
have given it too. She is making you hers.
Once, I would have pinned her in stare, 
squeezed your hand in triumph, as if
I owned a thing. But I see this differently
now. Her eyes cast further into a certain light.

I close my own. Let her have you for as long
as she needs. Even if she leads you, nameless,
into her imaginary bed. For now you are her
greatest pleasure. In time she will remember
you as the man with the diamond

tie, the fantasy whose arched lips she unleashed
over her body. I cannot tell her these lips
are the same ones I daily curse, kiss, marry
again. Instead I want her to have you,

keep you, love this unknown love. Let her make
you this beautiful, this pure, your hand open
to hers, the rushing train, let her hold you
forever in it.