

**Jill Magi**

**Vacate / Land**

We found false floors.

Took measures to arrest

the sag. A staircase slopes

toward a serene arrival.

Foyer. Pamphlet. Tour

and photograph. Caption.

\*

To vacate or

land. How history

from a hilltop

changes a vacation

is not the shape

of settling.

\*

land title secret

if it be wanting

little spider web

if it be wanting

secret land of barley  
if it be wanting            then satisfy

\*

Highways here  
lined by throughgoing

leaves holding  
history running

toward borders  
the green side of trunks.

Hide the baby  
in knotty bark.

The owl, wings, wind,  
ghosted, no longer

on vacation  
a nation comes upon

a gate rusting  
railroad traces.

\*

Fort number 4. Site  
number 2. Found

on or close to bedrock.

Lights automatic

cast the shape of  
safety. Sectioned,

sifted, proof. Shallow  
grave, shadowy birch.

\*

The ethnographic present  
begins with

settling.  
Scythe swing,

sweep of the pen.  
Passport, deed,

white-steepled  
postcard wishing

you were here  
is an environment

without a pronoun  
bending

under the weight  
of vacant land.

**Working note to “Vacate / Land”**

“Vacate / Land” is part of a longer work entitled *Point of Survey*, a project that explores the social and literary construction of nature, especially spots that we deem “vacationland.” Much of the language in this poem comes from historical and literary texts, as well as advertising pamphlets and newspaper articles on the state of Vermont.

*from Compass and Hem*

PILLAR

if I follow you down to your paralysis garden    your pillar of salt  
dry    agency is                                  but now to speak the army who  
marches toward                                  my solid                                  lifting to be still  
a compass toward                                  your figure                                  a turn to  
the city                                  splinter my obedience oh splinter our  
sound    sounds

LOT

state of locked-in                                  a fitted cap of software invades to  
express is to move                                  but I toward quieting                                  softward  
they say they want to know                                  I conserve  
presiding my unspeech                                  their murmurs lie they lie  
I move toward away to give you a way                                  still life a stutter  
your grave heart    bereft    barren  
deviant    they lie

TARANTELLA

who sings a deeply troubling fold                                  a bent back                                  bent  
lament                                  I paint my heart who listens                                  my lips  
not so experienced forming                                  ocular paralysis a mirror  
swallows breath                                  she soars across terminology                                  terminal  
live inhumation                                  say                                  history of nest    nesting as a  
spine a waltz    I live because she who sings not  
feathers your fading    I attempt honor                                  honor  
your    for the split will be long    upon

## LOT

and within this page she against wept  
a split through which no sun or distance read  
it is possible for your pity to slip the child the surface  
will not compress further

## MIRROR

easily slipped her red room full is anger he says  
pulley fastened to above is anger hot your  
cool paralysis finds blue order order my  
worlds under his engineering words  
my anger a room is drawn inside

## PILLAR

you cradle stasis you entering  
the after curl bellowing room fills with after  
post or pillar beneath a wall felt buckling  
concrete map and wired map map lay upon hot  
spine of this after Jordan ocean or pillow  
of history come again to re-  
mind

## PILLAR

called family word net so  
lashed and stricken  
would not move small in your iron lung  
around a seal fragile around the fragile  
now again

**Working note to excerpts from *Compass and Hem***

*Compass and Hem* investigates ideas of individual agency, the meaning of paralysis, cultural constructions of health and disease, and the difficulty of using language to express bodily states. Language here is from sources including my research on polio (a disease my mother had as a child and now has again in the form of post-polio syndrome), the work of poet Julia de Burgos and performer Diamonda Galas, and the Biblical story of Lot's wife who was turned into a pillar of salt as a punishment for looking back at the city from which she was forced to flee.

**Jill Magi's** *Threads*, a hybrid work of poetry, prose, and visual art, is forthcoming in the fall of 2006 from Futurepoem Books. Her chapbook *Cadastral Map* was published in 2005 by Portable Press at Yo-Yo Labs. Recent work has appeared in *Jacket #29* (<http://jacketmagazine.com/29/magi-elrick.html>), *CutBank*, and in a chapbook made for the Dusie publishing collective ([www.dusie.org](http://www.dusie.org)). Jill runs Sona Books, a community-based chapbook press with a corresponding web magazine ([www.sonaweb.net](http://www.sonaweb.net)), and she teaches at The City College of New York Center for Worker Education, a liberal arts degree program for working adults.