

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.

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). Jill runs Sona Books, a community-based chapbook press with a corresponding web magazine (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.