**Available: *The Poetry Foundation*. Web.** [**https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/52577/monet-refuses-the-operation-56d231289e6db**](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/52577/monet-refuses-the-operation-56d231289e6db)

**Monet Refuses the Operation**

By [Lisel Mueller](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/lisel-mueller)

Doctor, you say there are no haloes

around the streetlights in Paris

and what I see is an aberration

caused by old age, an affliction.

I tell you it has taken me all my life

to arrive at the vision of gas lamps as angels,

to soften and blur and finally banish

the edges you regret I don’t see,

to learn that the line I called the horizon

does not exist and sky and water,

so long apart, are the same state of being.

Fifty-four years before I could see

Rouen cathedral is built

of parallel shafts of sun,

and now you want to restore

my youthful errors: fixed

notions of top and bottom,

the illusion of three-dimensional space,

wisteria separate

from the bridge it covers.

What can I say to convince you

the Houses of Parliament dissolve

night after night to become

the fluid dream of the Thames?

I will not return to a universe

of objects that don’t know each other,

as if islands were not the lost children

of one great continent.  The world

is flux, and light becomes what it touches,

becomes water, lilies on water,

above and below water,

becomes lilac and mauve and yellow

and white and cerulean lamps,

small fists passing sunlight

so quickly to one another

that it would take long, streaming hair

inside my brush to catch it.

To paint the speed of light!

Our weighted shapes, these verticals,

burn to mix with air

and change our bones, skin, clothes

to gases.  Doctor,

if only you could see

how heaven pulls earth into its arms

and how infinitely the heart expands

to claim this world, blue vapor without end.

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Source: *Second Language* (Louisiana State University Press, 1996)