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Epigram

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EPIGRAM

Adrienne Su

No man is an island,
I learned in first-year Latin.
About women, they said nothing.

until we got to feminism:
“Work, not a husband or children,
is a woman’s reason for being,”

and I gave myself to poetry
as women who preceded me
had given themselves to men.

The poem made a private home
where I walked from room to room
as if from earth to heaven

and thrived on air and speech
and hunger, in domestic peace.
There the disasters began.

Men were taking the house apart
with neither metaphor nor art,
with only their bare hands.

Then there was nothing for sustenance
except the novel turbulence,
which flattened every word,

which is how I learned the skill
of silence, and line by line willed
myself gradually back to the world.

[*Meridians: feminism, race, transnationalism* 2001, vol. 1, no. 2, p. 154]
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