

fragments of their lives survive

by Jerry Ratch

Only fragments of their lives survive, like broken Sapphos. I have known them, alleged killer of themselves for the love of a man., but we know this is an invention. The leader of a whole guild of girls, who wrote 7 books of poems. What happened to them all? Easily moved by their own mutual desires under her nearly universal rule. Moveable, yes, loose, yes, but not prone to evil.

You may have seen them once at the edge of a cliff, standing firm against the fatty and oily, calf-like, so that they may have died peacefully if they were pushed over the edge into that vastness below, or above and beyond us. The great cycles in which all bodies return original, like water with its great sobbing, moaning out their names at a late hour, a going, a way, a passage, passing through this life on the way to the next.

Dropping through the gates of mystery, cries of joy around us, of one another. Little marriageable girls, fare thee well. Out of their longing come the names of kings, drifting seaward with the offshore breeze, singing *Sailor, Sailor, come in from the unsafe sea*. And keep coming in with the unborn tide, your old faces open, full, looking inward toward the moon, the vital air breeze breath life soul.

