

Vienna

by Neil McCarthy

“no river is a river which does not flow”

Louis MacNiece/Autumn Journal

Quiet but for us, the Danube's dim mirror was disturbed in her sleep as we swam naked through the shadows of the furs tilting in the clean summer wind.

In Heldenplatz we hollered opera to the dome and heard the sound of hooves in the echo; the rapturous applause that time would later condemn to silence.

We cut through Volksgarten to stop for a piss, shouting from behind trees about poems that would need to be written. If you were Gustav Klimt then I was Graham Greene in need of inspiration.

And by Christ I looked for inspiration. I looked up and down Ringstrasse, through the bustling parks in the First District, up and down the steps of the metro at Neubaugasse.

I imagined naked the girl at the bar in Café Carina, her skin surrendering tattoos her parents would never have approved of. She lit a cigarette and dressed herself in God.

At the market I looked at the old men selecting eggs as if their hands could see through the shells. I looked at David Rynhart's fingers, gently picking strings

with the same selective deftness.

I helped you up a ladder onto a rooftop and watched as you stood there, proud as a lighthouse, inspecting the ferocity of morning's fire blazing its westerly trail. There were three of us there.

And I looked five years deep into Marie's eyes and got lost until you pulled me back out. Do you remember that Stephen? Do you remember that view with the Danube stretching and waking not too far away?

I remember thinking the seasons are arriving later every year, as if the world has been slowed by the weight of graves. Or maybe she has simply become tired of turning in her sleep,

or lying awake though a night of endless alarms that nobody bothers to turn off.

