

Francesca Weekes

## Outside E5, Girton College

i.

I had a very lovely room this year  
Technically two rooms, a set filled with clear  
open light. I knew this before I moved in,  
but there was something I didn't know, a built-in  
secret: the inner chamber, the bedroom,  
hid a sash window leading out onto the roof.

Just a low roof, bowing over the library, but unfound  
for the most part—something to boast of, when on firm ground.

Sneaking onto it, a drop down from the sill  
then you paired your steps with God's—His will  
that the chapel's windows crouched at your feet,  
at the place where red brick and bluish glass meet.

Once I knelt for several minutes to catch the choir  
in their rehearsal hour, the voices rising higher  
than I, who cannot remember if it was that Sunday spell,  
Evensong; or Vespers, or Compline, can hope to tell.

ii.

Seven weeks ago I gained the roof for the last time—  
it was a strange night, a strange clime.  
Earlier I had walked Girton's woods in dull farewell light  
which broke upon branches and skinny bluebells from a height;  
this night was greyer still, the huge clouds constituting the sky.  
The globes of orange light from bedrooms were no match for the awry  
power of that expanse, its force and height, the way  
it was streaked purple and yellow like a charm, the fey  
charge of the atmosphere metallic on my tongue,  
the scariness of the pines against the sky where they hung.  
It felt like a fearsome message sent,  
This sky by heavy bolts of colour rent,  
A foreshadowing, a marvel, a strange portent.