

Kimberlee Ashby

A Woman in Blue Reading a Letter by Vermeer

If this canvas were a dress
full length
stretched from collarbone to anklebone
wrist to wrist
held to its frame
by so many pearl-headed pins
you'd think someone had cast a spell
somewhere some body cannot move
in her full length mirror
would you wear it

knowing
it's about becoming lines
like an elastic stretched so tight
it's about to break
fly across the room pearls flying
everywhere skimming
the surface of her blue
precious pebbles on water fighting
what's expected
gravity
the downcast eyes of
the woman in blue reading
a letter

All historians ask:
Is she pregnant?
Where is her waist-line?
They forget about
being laced-tight
bones-bruising-bones
hiding in the closet
the thin delicate glazes of paint
the clinging textures that make her
surroundings hazy even though
her body won't let her forget
there's art in this little room
her centrally placed figure
between kitchen table and chair
framed by the map on the wall
the view from the window
the letter
Check the grain
the walls
they call this perspective
everything converging to one point

And the point is
what if after all

these years you discovered the dress
has been worn inside-out
all these other colours hiding
another story
like reversible pockets
maybe a woman in blue reading a letter
was wearing red and painting
the view out the window
maybe she saw trees
tall thin lines of yellow ochre
with patches of viridian green
a pulsating sun of cadmium
yellow light all around
swirling clouds of Cerulean blue
All this a whole century before Van Gogh

maybe she knew
the world
wasn't ready for such colour