

Jen Rouse

An Afternoon in Paris

Of course we should all
kick up our heels and
run through historic fountains—
Parisian, preferably.
And we are smiling in
our cotton-candy
dresses. Our reflections
flickering
like fin-glistening
koi around us.

Over there
a silver-
haired mermaid
on a bicycle. She circles
and circles, moonlight
in the spokes
of her laughter.

These streets
are cobbled
with mirth, and
so one imagines
Gertrude and Alice
taking Basket
for a walk. Even
Gisele unfolds her
tripod and we hear
the collapsing

rasp of her
immediate
shutter.

The fountain
of what we
imagine
must matter
years later
when we
are
alone.

Complex Active Bodies

At first the light controls
not what it sees but the chemicals
coursing through its silken dome.
Equally necessary the nerves
to slurp the bottom of the sea,
one bobbing vacuum of a mouth.
Eventually there is need
and coordination for the mouth
to know the light to know
the reason for the need, to reach beyond
intake, to move through a column
of light the mouth to the head to combine
to lurch into being. A kind of consciousness,
a cradle for the new
wobbling attention-baby,
fumbling toward eyes.