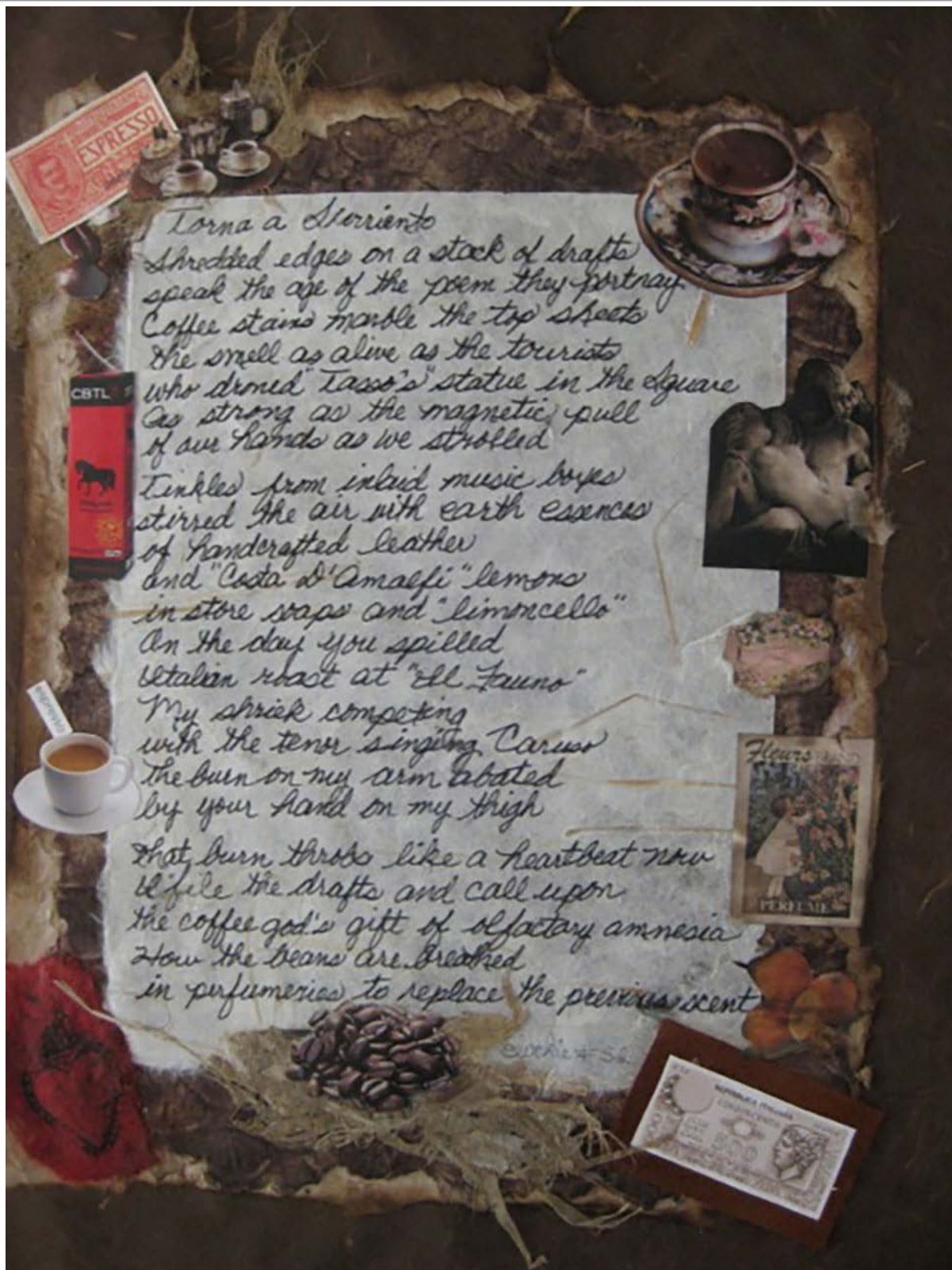


Ellaraine Lockie



Torna a Sorrento
Shredded edges on a stack of drafts
speak the age of the poem they portray
Coffee stains mangle the top sheets
The smell as alive as the tourists
who dined Tasso's statue in the square
As strong as the magnetic pull
of our hands as we strolled
Tinkles from inbred music boxes
stirred the air with earth essences
of handcrafted leather
and "Costa d'Amalfi" lemons
in store soaps and "limoncello"
On the day you spilled
Italian roast at "El Fuono"
My shriek competing
with the tenor singing Caruso
The burn on my arm abated
by your hand on my thigh
That burn throbs like a heartbeat now
I file the drafts and call upon
the coffee god's gift of olfactory amnesia
How the beans are treated
in perfumeries to replace the previous scent

First Five Minutes in Venice

He leans Marlboro Man style against the train window
opposite the exit between cars
In Italian he would be called *figo*
Dark stubble a day after harvest on head, neck and face
chiseled enough to be sculpted in the Uffizi Gallery

His eyes as black and fluid
as the Morellino di Scansano I drank last night
They meet mine and blend into a rare vintage
I'm the one finally whose eyes
swallow him whole in one downward descent

Tattoo a ring around the collar of his cotton T-shirt
Blue jeans with tears and white paint stains
in strategic spots
Zipper advertising merchandise with a gold-coin pull
Lamb's leather loafers over bare feet

On my optical ascension his hand that isn't holding
a lighter and home-rolled cigarette
cups the merchandise
So fast and sure that later I'll think I imagined it
I know I shouldn't but my eyes betray me and lock into his
Whose speak louder than the train brakes
that they've loyally never left my face

The stillness burns when other passengers brush by to exit
Twenty steps out I bend back to adjust luggage straps
And he's leaning against the side of the open door
Cigarette accenting his mouth

Now it's hips that betray me followed by mind
As I walk awash in that red-black-wine blush into the station
Wishing I'd bought those five-inch heels back in Florence
Because I know he's looking at my ass

Under Lock and Key

In an outdoor stall off Piazza Del Duomo
a steel cuff bracelet reflects the Tuscan sun
Blinding me to everything but the lock
holding it together
Identical to the one that guarded
secrets in my sixth-grade diary
with its equally diminutive key

Only this one stays married to the bracelet
by a delicate silver chain
The bracelet clamps around my wrist
by nostalgic force before I can pull
forty Euros from my purse

Now it haunts in softer glow
from the candle on a trattoria table
Like a gypsy fortune teller
it conjures up a man from a continent away
in minestrone steam and slightly blurred steel

Enrico Caruso goes mute
The Sangiovese grapes for chianti never ripened
And all of Florence is raising an empty glass
As the chimera reaches out
Snaps the chain
Thrusts the tiny key
into its destined perfect fit
And twists
Releasing the secret
into the tight-lipped Italian air

Keeping It Alive

That animal with ravenous appetite
conceived in chemistry
So elusive we've never seen it
Just felt its hunger growl
Claws digging into bare thighs
Teeth pulling fleas from each other's past
Eventually and invariably grows old

Lies down in a field
as fervent as the slow swell of grass
Its spirit sleeps on the comfort of security
More earthly parts run wild in the bush
Chase anything that knows how to turn
words or hips into Cupid's arrows
that ricochet wounds into partners

The pattern is always the same
whether it's electrons that once flew back
and forth like balls snapped off a racket
But now drop out of the sky
in the circadian rhythm of a dairy
Or the calloused hands of a spouse rubbed smooth
by robot stroke of the same body
Looking for illicit hard labor to work a libido numb

Oh to be an African lion, its corporeal cousin
and to hear only the voice of instinct
That tyrant who intimidates the intellect
and senses with ultimatum
Simple words for survival uttered through
guttural sounds that drip saliva, semen and blood
Democracy of mind never exists here
No language for *relationship* or *complexity*
No deaths except as ultimate decomposition of cells
A simple process of separation



Ellaraine Lockie's one-of-a-kind collages combine her three passions of poetry, papermaking and collage. She uses lifetime collections of handmade papers, postage stamps, charms, milagros, buttons, shells, rocks, feathers, pressed leaves and flowers, rubber stamps, travel memorabilia, magazine clippings and poetry. She has authored the book, *The Gourmet Paper Maker*, which is published in six languages.

Some of Lockie's collages have been selected for juried art shows, and two are in permanent collections at the Aquarium of the Pacific in Long Beach, California, and in the Centrum Art collection in Port Townsend, Washington. They have also been featured in *The Centrifugal Eye*, along with an essay on their origin, and in *Rio Grande Review*.