

epistle by T.C. Casella

suspended at my small wooden desk  
dust hangs in the light  
percussion pauses on the keys  
I wonder if I am the only person who types in rhythm

this matchbox flat a disorganized city  
with separate zoning for clothes, books, and tissues  
old receipts articles to be read  
small devices  
earrings that have lost their partners  
and that 1929 copy of Lady Chatterley I promised you still  
dozing on my shelf

screams and laughter of school children pierce  
the lace curtains of my miniature labyrinth  
and again I  
erase a line  
then  
another  
rearrange the empty spaces  
clearing here a *k* there an *s*  
adding a vowel in between  
another agonized tongue tie  
wrung like old rags that washed dirty dishes  
now laying swollen under that leaking pipe in the bathroom  
predicate and preposition  
another item to be cleaned later

a half knit sweater in the attic collecting dust left by termites

colors slowly change  
white acquires a bluish hue  
the percussion fades and

Dearest

my sister's parakeet by T.C. Casella

among the disorganized buildings of  
clutter she rested her spoon daintily,  
the yogurt still swaying like a boneless  
body in her barely open mouth laughing:

this is where I spend my days and nights pouring  
vanilla tea with russian cigarettes  
and honey cream dancing alone to  
Italian disco and fantasizing  
about the windows across the street.

are you still in that basement apartment  
in the city? she asked, sussing out the  
final slivers of yogurt from the tin  
carefully as an archeologist  
combing out the truth of tutankhamen.

while I told her about my high-rise buildings  
and low-rise thongs my dinners there and here,  
the nights of wandering lazily through  
streets in silence a mist poking its toes

into every corner before alighting  
from a bit of drooping roof to fall among  
the fractured flowers and all along my  
life in seven boxes inside a stone square  
like a parapet,

she leaned forward, then back, lifted her right  
leg in a flamingo, curling her toes  
gracefully behind.

do you remember my pet parakeet?  
she said. she sat on my shoulder  
cleaned my hair strand by strand.  
she used to fly into the wall sometimes.