

One

Serge Patrice Thibodeau

a translation of *Seul on est*

by Jo-Anne Elder



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Stories given voice: the tides of the mascaret at dawn, its ice bronze;
alone, one hears all the voices, silent before the exquisite,
facing the blizzard, entering it, penetrating the breath
of the whirling white joy that slips between the pages

of a book open wide
into the gaping sphere,
— luminescent as a desert isle —
a one-bodied pulse
at its centre.

No root can perish, time barely moves; threads of grass,
strands of salt or sun caught between its fingers, underground,
where everything moves, where the world begins again, wild and giddy,
where everything pauses and stirs to rhythms that cannot be altered,

embers as far as the eye can see,
to the island that holds the horizon
— against the current of the Deportation —
high on the cliff before the church caught
between the everlasting and the evergreen of Pointe-Sapin.

Everything connects, nothing keeps the dispersed bodies from reuniting,
earth is left a legacy of love for the exquisite, even if one is reborn alone;
at night, especially, knowing that sight stretches out, alone, from within,
going back over one's steps, musky leaf-mould along the shore,

making a bed in its own nest,
underbrush, undersea, undergrowth,
— at night, one can see nothing but the whole —
for as long as it takes to gather
goodness.

Naked, on the ground, incantatory white, a flock of mallards shifts, merges
for a moment with a remnant of blue; the sounds of the marsh under the snow
vibrating, articulate chime in the ear, absorbing its attention,
until only the compelling refrain lingers:

no, not again, no longer;
what has been torn away,
— bark from the water, sap from the rock —
all this breathes once more,
and no one has to depart again.

What was torn from the flesh, all of it returns, settles, lodges
in the veins, the troubled tides, for alone one is sound, alone
one is word, alone one awaits the inevitable return of the churning tides;
balanced on the back of a mother burdened and worn, one

is dying to love, dying to begin again,
everything repeating and rebounding
— tirelessly —
in the circle of mystery,
mad with the most precious complicity.