



Five Images from Pablo Picasso's Volland Suite

1. *Au bain (At the Bath)*

Temporarily washed of myself by art—scrubbed of intimacy and chastened by the cleansing—and in solitude, despite him, gathered in the metronome of my heartbeat. I'm solid and fleshly in his eyes—he sketches even as I shrug his watching—and my girlhood is prone: summers stretch under my skin with brushed lagoons. His gestures absorb me until I live behind his wet eyes; his gaze washes back and forth like sea on shingle; his hands run like water over the tooth of his paper. I listen to the drip, drip of how he construes me.

2. *femme nue a la jambe pliee (Nude Woman with Bent Leg)*

I am a contortion of longing. As he observes me, my leg twitches. I hold my position. He scores me lightly, gathering me in his lines. Cross-hatchings crowd like memory: a farmhouse; yellow fields; cottonwoods throwing shade against wind; my mother lifting clothes to a line. I believed the horizon was God's eyelid, lying on earth, blinking bloodshot purples. This day's end becomes me as he drops his pencil and walks out into the street. I will not see him for hours, wearing evening's chiaroscuro like a shirt.

3. *Deux buveurs catalans (Two Catalan Drinkers)*

They are one another, though not the same. One's gestures are the other's movements forty years later. What one has seen the other already imagines. Their conversation takes them where neither would otherwise go—for instance, standing in awe in the face of alpine tundras that are spotted with dwarf shrubs and cushion plants. One has sailed there and the other shapes it with his hands. To trawl cold waters and discover a way of seeing. They drink to that and the future, imagining themselves carousing as long as the world lasts.

4. *Taureau ailé contemple par quatre enfants (Four Children Watching a Winged Bull)*

A winged bull enters their dream. Stars are pulled from the sky. They gather wailing in buckets, understanding that the world looks away. Feed me, they say, and the bull offers its teats. Spare me they plead, and the bull chooses a few stragglers. Shrapnel punctuates the air; blood covers bodies; the world howls. Look at me, the bull says, but they lose their sight. Turning blindly, they see thoughts like black flags. The bull grows as large as the world.

5. *Sculpteur, modèle accroupi et tête sculptée (Sculptor, Seated Model and Sculpted Head)*

I am not another's idea. His art cannot see me. His sculpture repudiates my fine, long-lined bones. He makes this other figure over and over. It might be me, if I were obdurate and unthinking stone. He might caress me if I believed in the form he shapes. As it is, he contorts and reorients me. At night it's the same—his hands rest on my separate solidity. He quizzes me often: who is this person? What is this work I have made?

Paul Hetherington

Au Bain: <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/63720>

Femme nue a la jambe pliee: <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/63859>

Deux buveurs catalans: www.nga.gov/collection/art-object-page.39091.html

Taureau ailé contemple par quatre enfants: <https://catalogue.swanngalleries.com/Lots/auction-lot/PABLO-PICASSO-Taureau-aile-contemple-par-Quatre-Enfants?saleNo=2522&lotNo=327&refNo=764734>

Sculpteur, modèle accroupi et tête sculptée: http://www.artnet.com/artists/pablo-picasso/sculpteur-modele-accroupi-et-tete-sculptee-from-ZwFR9uKXd_bw30IjxCWjDg2

Paul Hetherington is a distinguished Australian poet. He has published 16 full-length collections of poetry and prose poetry, including *Her One Hundred and Seven Words* (MadHat, 2021), the co-authored epistolary prose poetry sequence, *Fugitive Letters* (with Cassandra Atherton, Recent Work Press, 2020), and *Typewriter and Manuscript* (Life Before Man, 2020), along with a verse novel and 12 poetry chapbooks. He has won or been nominated for more than 30 national and international awards and competitions. With Cassandra Atherton, he is co-author of *Prose Poetry: An Introduction* (Princeton University Press, 2020) and co-editor of *Anthology of Australian Prose Poetry* (Melbourne University Press, 2020).



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 December 2021
 November 2021
 October 2021
 September 2021
 August 2021
 July 2021
 June 2021
 May 2021
 April 2021
 March 2021
 February 2021
 January 2021
 December 2020
 November 2020
 October 2020
 September 2020
 August 2020
 July 2020
 June 2020
 May 2020
 April 2020
 March 2020
 February 2020
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 June 2018
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 April 2018
 March 2018
 February 2018
 January 2018
 December 2017