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Vilnius // English Kills // Bushwick, Brooklyn

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MONICA WENDEL

Vilnius

In Lithuania
my roommate made art
about hating Jews—

I escaped to a field
where I watched boys play soccer,
some universal sport
even in dream.

But things were dangerous.
I rode the elevator back up to the apartment
pushed her against the wall
shouting about soldiers
looking for people like me.

She looked surprised
that ideas could have consequences.

I didn't destroy her art.
I woke up instead
and turned off the air conditioner
and took the dog out.
Grey clouds marbled over red brick buildings,
over the old factory we live in.

You were still sleeping.
In darkness, at night, your paintings
become the flags ships use
to signal each other
across wide empty spaces—
this one for civic pride,
this one for genocide.

MONICA WENDEL

English Kills

I've been singing
in a dead language
about the sun.
The children know
it can come back to life;
just ask the Israelis
who made up words
they couldn't find in the Torah—
T-shirt, rainbow.
But *rainbow* must have been there.
Maybe I'm remembering this wrong.
In my dream, I was on a farm,
presenting a PowerPoint.
One slide was a picture of a mother
kneeling by her child,
the other was a backyard
abutting the Newton Creek,
and then the computer
stopped working. In real life
the creek branches
into English Kills and Maspeth Creek.
Don't be alarmed:
Kills was only Dutch for something.
Was it stream. Was it water.
They're all dead now,
those first discoverers.
My mother is scared

of the tunnels the Gazans
are building
but I am scared of any prison
no matter how large
and must always take the side
against the guards.
Call it my stubborn calling.
She told me once
that language is a river,
not a fish tank.
You can never capture
all the words.

MONICA WENDEL

Bushwick, Brooklyn

Admit it: you lose more keys
than all the travelers in the hostel combined.
And a summer storm is riding from the sidewalk
when the downstairs neighbor says,
“Did you know, there are apartments
above the coffee shop?” You say, yes,
because, look, this whole street
is buildings with three floors,
what did she think was there?
And she, coke hungover, says, “But where
is the *door*? How do they get upstairs?”
then huffs off. At least the front door
is open now. In your dream last night
you were in a red-lit basement
flooding with water. Sometimes the delivery
dealer rings your doorbell by accident.
The coffee shop has a lost-key app
on an iPad by the register.
Go there. They’ll let you in, next time.
They always do.