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Mutabor: the gorge

by Karl Kirchwey

They went down to the gorge of the Petite Gryonne,
in May, this was, a boy and a girl,
when the hairs on the stem of the nettle
stand up straight, and gray-eyed the water runs,

too cold to bear for more than a moment,
over the basalt pebbles veined with quartz,
and in the woods a bird pleadingly iterates
its song against the constant noise of the torrent,

and they lay down not far from a mound of snow
dumped from the bridge above during the winter,
from the Roman arch of the bridge, like a small glacier
shawled with filth and weeping slowly away now,

a hollow melted in it like the cave where immortal Parvati
rubbed her own skin to make the jovial god,
companion of her loneliness, but instead
they had only each other, the girl and the boy,

and you know what they did, but perhaps you have forgotten
why they did it, faced with the water's endlessness,
the untranslatable grief of the bird's paraphrase,
the nettle's vivid green, or the veined stone;

and the sun was warm, even in that deep gorge,
below the dark chalets unavailable to them,
the plumped duvets, the flare of geraniums,
and they were never wiser than in that knowledge.

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