

## *The Last Page*

### **The Waiting Room**

This here is nowhere. A circle of whiteness squared  
to still the furthest confines of the room.  
Passengers pass by with nothing to declare,  
papers and permissions all approved.  
As ceaseless movement breaks in waves  
of sound on sound, a static too thickly sewn to undo  
grounds us in a place of stark sensation  
where mattresses are spread thinly on the ground  
and belonging can't be found in our slow translations.

We are lined in plastic chairs designed to hold  
the waiting in repeated patterns of suspense.  
We are kept, until our stories fracture, or go untold;

until the end of each sentence  
no longer lands on our intended close,  
but wavers under scrutiny so intense

it strips the light and walls of tone.  
As we are ourselves staring back at ourselves  
in mirrors on a windowless wall,

outside is excised and this faint resolve  
flattens into a fierce, bright sterility  
and homelands dissolve

into a maze of faulted memory  
where landmarks skip and trade places.  
Here, we cling to a new strain of fluidity

and pray, until this room is our enclave.  
We mutter days to dusk until the dour  
grey linoleum is bathed in real light and made

a yard where yellow lilies flower;  
a street where soft rock and church bells toll successive lines  
to pierce the bloom of each mistaken hour

and contort the tannoy's frequent chimes  
into muezzin calls from minarets  
and children's playground pantomimes;

until our conditioned air is fired  
with saffron and bergamot  
and a cathedral swells between the sets

of inward-facing chairs, and the mirrors lit  
with votives glow softly in the dark  
while the booming speaker's voice is rich

with words caught from tongues and torn apart,  
which should mean *home*, but hold us here,  
in a broken spell of missed departures.

Kim Lockwood