

NO MATTER HOW

By Greg Emilio

*Longing, we say, because desire is full
of endless distances.*

—Robert Haas, “Meditation at Lagunitas”

It smells sulfuric
as our bodies steam
like kettles in the starless
winter sky. The mineral
spring bellows beside us
its geothermal murmur;
ancient salts pirouette
opaque ballerinas.

Not even a moon
peers out from beyond
the clouds, no silver
to pierce the sycamore
boughs stretched over
our lengths of skin,
lengthened under
the staggered leaves.

Without words
we say *never before*
never this before
never, no, not ever...

My elbow rubs
a raw pestle into
the plank along
the pool and turns sore,
so the downward angle
diminishes: we
bridge a few inches.

And I'm void
of verse or rhyme,
holding a poetry tasting
cardboard under my tongue;
unable to articulate the punctuated
glint of her iris.

Wind sings between
the branches overhead.
Guttural noises
rise from the turbid brine,
coalesce between our likenesses
and fill as one a pair of hollow shells.

But that empty
still echoes, continues
its un-cadenced rhythm
across the distance that desire
fills with longing, no matter
the touch, or how gathered of laughter,
wonder-drunk among the communion
of a lip-pressed, sky-darkened union.

Will it ever be enough?
we ask aloud.

The wind purls,
and we sense once again
our distinct, steaming skins.☺