



AFTER LIVES

Regina Buccola

First, I had to learn to accept that France
would continue to exist without me in it.
I had to learn to spit out my own tongue
onto the marshy soil of *l'Angleterre*,
turn from proud princess to scorned, flouted queen.

Next, I had to learn to lose the husband
I had been bought and brought from *la France*
to espouse: *Henri Six* ceased to be regal,
sensate, martial. I had to strap on his breastplate,
ride astride, fight his battles, piss standing up.

Then my son, my joy, England's last hope.
My Edward—not the headstrong rebel who
pushed him out of the throne after his father
pushed him out of the line of succession.
La reine, moi; le roi, mon fils. Régnant.

And then I had to lose England itself, my second
home, burial ground of all that I had loved
as a woman, to thrash back across the Channel
to the land I had left as a girl, giddy with fear,
dizzy with delight at the prospect of being a queen.

Finally, I lost myself in the tabloid verses
of the paparazzi poet: the worst sins
in the most sordid terms, trapping me
in a land I'd long since left, carrying the head
of a man I'd never loved. *Loup. Tigre. Reine.*