

Joshua Roberts

Le Voyage dans la Lune

Three chops into this night's visit to La Choze du Chateau
Rouge
(40 rue de Clignancourt, just down Montmartre's hill from
the room where I'm living out
my midlife sabbatical, my halfway-to-the-grave escapade,
a stay of indeterminate length -- weeks? months? --
my personal voyage dans la Lune
until the money or courage runs out and I'm forced back to
Earth,
kick the sub-lettor out of my Brooklyn one-bedder,
see if I can get my business out of the freezer and figure how
to survive in America again),

I visit the bar's convenience and there's the porcelain
floorplate with its two footprints
bracketing the drain
as if to steady the veriest drunk (which I'm not yet quite),

And there is no getting around the resemblance those sunken
white ridge-soled prints bear
to those pressed eternally into lunar dust by the Apollonians
(all right, quite drunk),

Neil Armstrong first and foremost among them and dead this
morning I learned,
the news across the time zones still humbling me as I stand
in the small room's
ordained small steps,
a gulf wider than any giant leap can bridge between my
history and Armstrong's,

his bootprints on the Moon (the Moon, always and necessarily capitalized) forever.

-- And even that thought is a failure, self-pity squared,
as I hereby confess it's not me in Paris this summer at all but
my cousin,
his exploits I'm channeling, his voyage, his courage and not
mine at all,
trying it on for literary size but it's an awkward fit, stuck
here on the sofa in humid South Philly
when my cousin's phone snapped the picture in the WC and
batted it across the Atlantic,
subject-lined "Here's another one"
to be saved in the folder with all the rest (famous graves in
Père Lachaise, snappy storefronts and street art),
this is what happens when you don't make plans, you watch
everyone else live out theirs, life down to one mere
step at a time,
a rut, one foot not even in front of the other.