Geraniums

—for Henry 1958 - 2010

I wanted to tell you to photograph
the blond woman who leaned
out the upstairs window next door
to water geraniums in a windowbox.

She wore a blue blouse
the geraniums were pink.
Or she wore a pink blouse
the flowers were blue. Or
she wore no blouse her nipples
were pink and her eyes were blue.
Her hair gathered loosely up
by a flowered scarf.

You faced me and could not
have seen what I saw—
a woman smiling over some flowers,
her hair, her blouse, her bare arm
honeyed with sun;
she was bending toward you
with her watering can.

You were losing your eyes;
I wanted to give you the gift
of this photograph. Maybe
you could paint it yet, the way
Vuillard would have done,
on a scrap of cardboard,
her blouse, the loosened hair
luminous in the forever afternoon.
Maybe you knew her name—
someone who comes to the shore
every year. Maybe
a guest of the neighbors,
though she leaned from the window
and watered those flowers
as if they were her own.

In the old days we could have
watched for her to go out of the house
and down to the beach with her towel.
We could have followed, pretending
to wade nearby where she could see us,
could feel like sun on her skin
our unabashed admiration.

And later we might have found
some excuse for knocking at her door,
for presenting our hearts to be broken.

Kimberly Colantino, “Evening Shadows,” photograph