

FLYING BACK TO ENGLAND THAT FIRST TIME

poem by Rose Lennard



Image: "Aerial II" by Scott Wiggerman. "Flying Back to England That First Time" was written by Rose Lennard Ong for *Rattle*'s Ekphrastic Challenge, November 2023, and selected as the Artist's Choice.

from above there was something so tender
about the detailed tapestry of roads
and homes and gardens, each one different
and loved and tended, and it was like
seeing inside a body, all the organs
large and small, each with their own
precious unique purpose
and each unknowable, complex
and essential; all existing in conjunction
with the other parts but separate
and distinct. England so stewarded
and ancient, patterned by all the lives
that shaped it once, now buried under stones;
and all the lives that make it their own
and so patiently mow lawns, wash cars,
bring groceries home, take kids to football
and lessons on piano. People going
to lovers' trysts, hospital appointments,
working shifts, nodding to neighbours over gates.
As the light faded the roads were traced
with streetlights and headlight beams, and each
little ordered patch of earth outlined below
with trim hedge or fence, each house set
quietly back on its plot; and over the engines' roar
I could almost hear the night-feathered blackbirds
on telegraph poles or high up
in the leafy crowns of apple trees,
spilling out their evening song.