

JULIA SPICHER KASDORF

Gerard Manley Hopkins on the 6 Train

*I would have lived more fully if I'd memorized
more verse, wrote the dying Richard Rorty—pragmatist
to the end—as I would have lived more fully*

if I'd made more close friends. Just married, 1986,
typing labels for art slides, which by now must all
be digitized, in a basement of the Doris Duke mansion,

Fifth Ave. and 78th, I committed a poem each week,
hopeful and afraid Galway Kinnel would call on me
to recite for the workshop. That day—*Margaret*

are you grieving—I raced to Lexington, late,
leapt down the steps, token poised, as a graffitied 6
rumbled into the station. Of course the doors

before me didn't open, so I leapt to the next, slipped
between their closing, and snaked through the crowd
as we pulled from the platform. Only then I looked

back: empty benches and an unmistakable continent
of fresh blood on the floor of the closed car.
No one spoke as we tunneled under the East Side

with whatever had happened sealed up behind us, but
someone must have met my eyes in irony or solidarity
as New Yorkers do—as *the heart grows older it will*

come on such sights colder—I got out at Astor Place
like any other day, climbed into clear September air
and, still rehearsing that verse, strode past the parking lot,

now luxury apartments, where sidewalk vendors

hawked books, clothes, house wares, heroin—*worlds*
of wanwood leafmeal—this was before Giuliani

cleaned up the city. Naturally I was called to recite
that night—*the blight man was born for*—
and must have in some forgettable way. Alive

but alone now, I wonder if that poet priest
of long ago would make my story close so tightly,
too: it is everything and just myself I mourn for.