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The Projectionist's Letter

Jan Selving

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THE PROJECTIONIST'S LETTER

I must imagine myself doing something—conjure the time of day, my favorite chair and glass of wine, what music, my husband visiting friends, orange light reflecting from a neighbor's window—before I can sit and listen and drink. In sleep I play movies for migrating birds—that abandoned drive-in by the interstate where night strokes the screen like a mandolin—rising hand descending. / *want to sleep the dream of apples.*

Light's grain *in voce*— the
screen, watch the screen.

"I figured you knew what you were doing," Trintignant's wife says at the end of *The Conformist,* says "I figured you knew what you were doing" when everything is gone. I restart the projector so I can learn how to be, know when to run and stop running, in my booth filled with spools. The ticketholders leave their velveteen and wood, follow me home, become that shivering congress watching from the lawn, or those who accidentally judge the scenes I've created when startled from dishes or the evening news, who say to themselves, *something isn't quite what it should be,* then swiftly dismiss the thought.

At the movies Marcello, large vested,
poured onto a morning, those wondrous
cannolis and the dovesong beyond the
canopy ...

Displacement, a clinician's word ... not being ... where you ... are when you are there. If I confide in friends they'll say: "No, that isn't the right mood," or "You forgot to lower the blinds first," and I will have to go back and find what I've done wrong. Mother floats above the family dinner table, her place gone. When will she know she's dead, this shadow of sunlight and plasma? I close

my eyes, see her stiff rocking, send her away with matches and Little Walter's slow train and smoke.

Marcello, smile on me,
come to where the saints are weeping
in their glass prisons stuffed with cake.

We are watched both day and night by
all that we have lost.