



## Literature

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### [Elaine Terranova](#)

When Janell asked,  
 "What is literature?"  
 I felt I had to explain.  
 "What might really happen "  
 or "something  
 you make up." Then I saw—

that could be spite  
 or lies. I might have said,  
 "what begins and ends,  
 what runs its course  
 once and after all."

For instance, it could be  
 when that couple I knew  
 moved into  
 the Carpenter Lane station,  
 neat clapboard  
 and gingerbread lace,  
 the railroad rented out  
 by the month.  
 In back, imagine  
 buds on the bushes,  
 but they'd have time to be roses,  
 small torches  
 caught before they flared.  
 And somewhere near,  
 a pond paying close attention,  
 doubling the world,  
 as water does or a story  
 does in the telling.

I might have said  
 how Janell 1,  
 you yourself, before,  
 are different from Janell 2,  
 you now. Though  
 I'd came to realize  
 it was always Janell  
 in the same plaid dress,  
 but fresh and clean  
 each week. Think how

to that couple  
 going out mornings  
 would have seemed a journey  
 and returning  
 in the fine blue dust  
 of twilight, a homecoming.  
 Either way, trains

coming and going,  
 so many goodbyes to wave  
 or hellos. And so  
 time passed.  
 What else could it do?  
 Or sometimes a light rain  
 might have fallen,  
 washing the day away.

Anyhow, today  
not a curtain moves,  
no one is there to see  
the passengers pass by.  
What happened  
is literature. Now at night  
the trains stand still  
in the yard,  
even the heavens are still,  
only the stars  
moving through them

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