

[poetry selected by Katherine Gallagher]

Major Titov Orbits the Earth

6th August 1961

I'm fourteen
a girl I suppose
but a possessed one
I don't care about Gherman Titov
orbiting for the Motherland
far above me in the blue
I'm possessed
spell-torn
my first poems
bucking and kicking
like unbroke colts
words rocket me
into my own outer space
accelerations
to inner worlds
Wordstung and wild
I'm oblivious to danger
from that day to this
at full gallop
one flesh with myself
bloodtrue it seems
(was it? is it?)
in the sanctuary-trap of words
no way back
and not caring about Major Titov
up where there's no space garbage yet
From his tincan craft
Gherman peers
down the well of air
sees his own smile drift
back up to him
from oceans and deserts
while I write my way
a girl I suppose
through the spinning day
my feet not touching the ground
even when the Major
makes safe landing
in the longlost (is it?) USSR

Penelope Shuttle