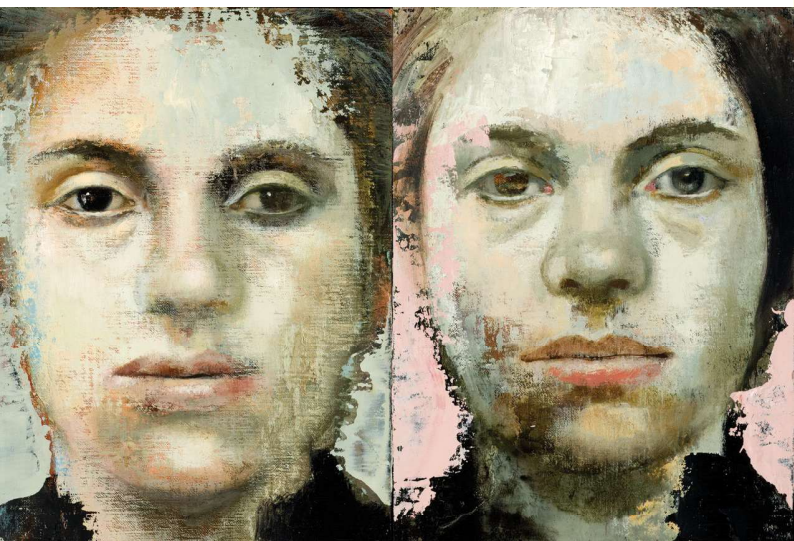


SUSAN MOORE

Likeness #4, 2014
Oil on Panel, 8 x 12 in



COURTESY THE ARTIST

FRANCES LEFKOWITZ

My Ancient Self

Finding solace
in eternal things

If it were up to me everyone would be sunken safely below pain, underneath the possibility of scars. Our shoulders would boast, our wombs would brag, we would not keep our bellies or anything else in the closet or under towels. Right now, this evening, I'm in the country alone and it's too clear and quiet. Last night I was in the city and it was too loud and crowded. A few minutes ago I poked my head out to see the misshapen moon, round on the bottom, flat on top. It is winter, though it was seventy degrees today. In the summer, does the moon get round on top and flat on the bottom? I am ashamed to say I do not know.

If I were my ancient self, I would have more patience; I would watch and listen and I would know about the shape of the moon and the season of the year because I would not have a clock or a calendar and the world around me would be my way of telling time and weather and when to do what. Also, I would sleep when the sun went down, wake when it rose.

Because the moon is low tonight, I can see Orion. I think of him as a friend and enjoy watching him traverse the sky in a night's time. He helps me get through winter, and perhaps that is why I moved from the city, where he and his dependable journey get drowned out by all the other lights. Orion can walk on water, a gift from his father, Neptune. But he is best known for hunting. He had

a friend or possibly a lover, depending on which version you go by, who killed him, accidentally or out of jealousy—again, it depends. Diana, of course, was a damned good hunter herself.

Once when I was very close to the equator, I looked up to the sky and saw Orion, my friend, who remains alive in the stars. His thin self was resplendent with stars, and it was then, in this tropical country, wealthy in darkness, that I saw his bow for the first time, a solid arc that curved around him like a halo, like a force field.

When I closed my door just now, I slammed it on my toe, making a bastard out of the poetic moment of mythology and memory, moon and stars. Then I logged onto the computer to eavesdrop on other people's steamy operations and found a picture of a friend, a friend in the virtual as opposed to the celestial sense. She was in a flowered sarong in front of palm trees in the very same equatorial country where I had seen Orion's bow. "Look up, look up," I whispered, but my voice made no indentation on the screen.

Frances Lefkowitz is a writer and editor and the author of *To Have Not*, a SheKnows Best Memoir of 2010. *To Have Not* is the story of growing up poor in 1970s San Francisco, getting a scholarship to an Ivy League college, and discovering the downside of upward mobility. Her flash fiction and micro-memoir have appeared in *Tin House*, *the Sun*, *Fiction*, *Rick Barthelemy's New World Writing*, and many other publications, and her essays have been Notable Mentions for the Pushcart Prize (twice) and Best American Essays (twice). Founder of the grant-funded Community Memoir Project, which teaches free memoir-writing classes in public libraries, Lefkowitz also teaches workshops in fiction. She is at work on a second memoir, about learning to surf at age thirty-six.