

Mary K. Stillwell

After Seit und Sein:

MARILYN MONROE IN OMAHA

How Marilyn got to Omaha, I'm not certain,
but there she was standing in the kitchen,
wearing Grandma's WPA apron, frying bacon.

"Hey," I said. She looked up from her work
at the stove and said, "Hey. Over easy?"
"You bet," I said, and she served them up,

bacon, eggs the way I like, hash browns,
toast with butter. And lots of hot coffee,
which she drank, too, sitting at the kitchen table
in early fall, late on a Sunday afternoon.

"What you doing here," I asked. "In the kitchen?"
"Why Omaha? You're here.
How else am I to see you?"
"Making bacon and eggs," I said, marveling.
"Because your mother died and her mother.
I'm a woman. I had a mother. I'm dead,"

she said by way of explanation. She was right:
it was soothing having her here.
I would have never guessed it, Marilyn
pouring coffee into my cup here in Omaha.

I got to thinking, people don't know Marilyn,
just hang their own clothes on her. "I played
my part in it," she said smiling, and I noticed

as her lips met the coffee cup that they were
regular lips. "When men saw them,"
she said, suddenly, "they thought of their cocks."

I was shocked. "You're pretending,"
she said, and I had to agree. "But what
does this have to do with my mother?" I asked,

and she shrugged that shrug of hers, only now
I saw it was an I-don't-know shrug not
a breast-hiking shrug so men would notice,
though it might be that, too.

"We're both dead," she offered. "*Dasein*.
Heimat. Dwelling," she continued, recalling Heidegger,

"We learn from the dead," paraphrasing Hölderlin.

So we do, I thought, *andenken*, my mother's cascade
of words, rain over the falls, generation
after generation into the ultimate silence.

Marilyn came around the table to hug me.
It was not like hugging a star. It was not
hugging a sex goddess. She was no bimbo.
Her dress stayed down; breasts have many uses.
"*Heimat*," I repeated and I felt her head nod.

We were two women, in embrace,
the dead giving life to the living,
along the *auseinandersetzen*.