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Antarctica

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Written upon the signing of a 1991 U.N.-sponsored treaty designed to preserve Antarctica as an “unclaimed continent.”

If my flat in Chicago is haunted, it’s haunted by cabbages, and maybe by a woman whose husband held her head under the newly installed running water as punishment for burning dinner in 1920. It’s haunted by the 20th century creeping in with its wire bones, its closed frontier, its bulbs and gramophones.

If there’s the ghost of a frontier left, it’s in Antarctica. Maybe the woman with soaking hair dreamed of pulling on her sweater and heading south past Patagonia to fields of white waves enchanted into an acropolis of ice, where she could crash into stillness, a caryatid in a landmass without memory barely brushed by the cabbage steam and the chapped red dishwater hands of history.