

# Thomas Paine

Helena Neufeld

You're always accusing me of not living,  
and it's true I can't get lost in a  
metropolis, don't seek out the whitewater.  
Sometimes I can hardly speak to you for  
the landmines—everywhere the  
ragtime comes in and we're dashing off  
a film set together, a one-night show.  
I have tried living and I've tried being  
honest, that vestigial organ. Sitting  
with you in the rain, leaving.  
Divining tea leaves, taking a nap.  
Sometimes you walk past me and  
my nose starts bleeding, but it's only  
women's work. And you've always  
known who you are: Those legs  
like song lyrics, voice like cracked  
melon, that's never been the problem.  
Sometimes a song is a bruise.  
Time makes more converts than reason.  
You think you know living,  
but it's only your living,  
and you don't know me at all.

*Author's Note: "Time makes more converts than reason" is something my grandmother used to say. It comes from the first page of Thomas Paine's 1776 pamphlet "Common Sense". I'm not yet sure if it's true.*