

The New Criterion

Poems

Three poems

by [Mary Jo Salter](#)

Icelandic almanac

I. The sky in Akureyri

in July is high and broad,
with here and there a dome of cloud
cocked like a hat that doesn't fit.

Nothing can put a cap on it,
this light that lasts all night,
even when the long, elliptic sun,

a low plane circling for an open
runway, nearly lands—
but throwing up its hands, ascends

by slow degrees again.
After a while, though every motion
tends to the horizontal, what

you're hoping for isn't sundown but
rainfall: something to precipitate
the end of a relentless,

restless Paradise.
Time an eternity of space . . .
Time watching as dark, overblown

clouds hold their breath all day, then
drily fly away; time beaten thin
enough it may have passed

entirely into mist.
When at last the first
cloud dissolves (a tablet

in its o ...

Mary Jo Salter is the author of *Open Shutters: Poems* (Knopf).

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