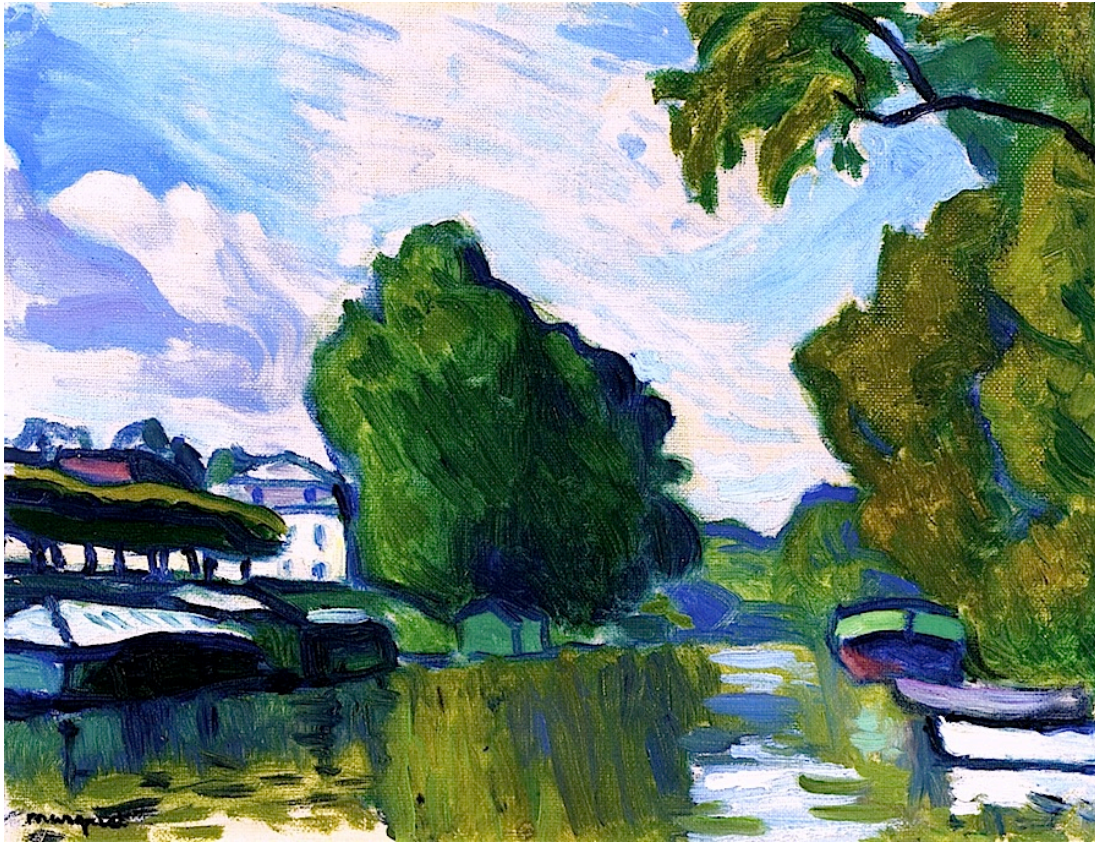


# Under the Rose

by [Ankur Betageri](#) (December 2018)



*Poissy, by the Seine*, Albert Marquet, circa 1908

In spring he's drawn  
to flowers in the park.  
His cheeks heat up as he walks past  
beds of peonies and crocuses.  
And the bougainvillea radiates  
the youth of a girl with shoulderless top.  
  
'Don't touch the flowers,'

tells the sign. He doesn't want to;  
in fact, he flees. But sadness  
overwhelms him. Desire-  
thwarting rules—everywhere.

Tired, he stands under a tree  
and looks at the fallen thistles. Women in burkha  
glance at him, giggle. A stray follows them  
its tail swishing in diabolical menace.

Between the green hurry and gleaming stalk  
the wanderer feels stranded  
like a stone-chair embedded in the middle of a walk.  
From Lal Bagh to Lodhi Gardens  
the same floral electricity, the same brooding skies  
ignites the lover's dark-dark thoughts.

When the call unanswered is smothered by leaves  
and the park is a crematorium of deepening sighs,  
he whispers under the wilting lips of a rose  
and an eye beckons him to the edge of the woods.

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