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Crossing Boundaries

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Crossing Boundaries

Andrena Zawinski

We tip wine glasses to Paris, Bastille Day,
whirl and twirl each other across the walk,
swing into the street, two women travelers,
smiling and laughing until the hems of our skirts
are singed by firecrackers tossed at our feet
by men demanding dances we would not give.

Women in hijabs pull us into a cloistered corner
of sisters inside La Belle Equipe, encircle us,
show us how to position hands, stretch out arms,
as if to push away looming shadows
of their guardians and husbands, crossing
boundaries of differences for what we share—

where years later extremists with Kalashnikovs
would spray bullets into the crowd along that same
Rue de la Charonne—a sidewalk to turn altar
of flowers, candles, sentiments, and tears,
women embracing each other, trying to hold
the world together—in courage and fear.