

the MOON & MORE

errant verse



Reginald Hyatte
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INVOCATION

Blue beyond the blue my lunar muse
Lyricizes the Earth Gone the Skies Call
360² horizons
Echo and echo the night-borne muse

Free at last ah! creation free
At last I harmonize a poem
A vagrant moonbeam catches my eye &
The heavens move and so move me

An instant of breathlessness releases
From silence fartlike my airy song
Or lighter than air now exalting
Ever zenithward free flight at last

cenotaph in northern Ohio

PRAIRIE NONONSENSE GRAINBEARING PRAIRIE
& PUFFS OF CLOUD & BLUEWINGED COWS

I LI[V]E IN A GARDEN OF CORN
WITH HEDGEROWS SO DENSE
A LAUGH COULDNT SQUEEZE
IN OR OUT

1971

the LOVIN'DRINK, in three fluid fragments: TRÍSTRAN & YSÓLT

I. HOW THE SLEEPING TRISTRAN BROUGHT YSOLT ACROSS THE IRISH SEA FOR HER TO WED HIS UNCLE MARK, THE CORNISH KING

She can't sleep / the full sail rides a sea of moonshine
Before the dawn of Ysolt's wedding day / creak and groan
The timbers / whirlpools yawn and sucking sing
Beneath the pitch-sealed hull.

Her hand shaky from gin extends against wind
And pulse of wave / verses undulate fold upon fold
In her bridal bouquet / a verbal sorceress Tristan
Conveys to charm the king.

Your hand searching the sea's erratic surface / drift
Dreamless Ysolt from the moonlit Irish shore / vaguely
Complex your fuddled wakefulness with waiting and Love's
Liquid licks / a wave of incontinent folly
Piques your vagrant musing.

By the mossy back of whales / pilot cut the shallow sea
Between the rocks an irresistible tide runs
A paper boat in a tub / sleep lovely Tristan below
Among your hounds asleep or not / the hero's curving
Bow that bobs below above the soapy suds
Invites dogs' hot licks and the tickling tongue of a queen
Who laps the foamy sea.

Across the flat back of whales the ship skips and jostles
The muse midstream / Ysolt of the white page in essence
Nothing with sails spread wide to the wind that does not
Blow across my writing table / these words make no sound
Except a little scratching that runs down this pencil
And up high in the cordage a dogged wind howls / seals
Baying run words down.

Swêpt away ûnder a grêy wave of pâssion / Mark loads
His harpoon with imagery supernaturally
Fluid I'm bleeding in a submarine garden he shakes
His blade she swallows he shoots salty bullets her cheeks
Puff pufferffishffful pulse once twice 3 4 5 6
& sink as Ysolt falls & rises & yields to the deep
Phallocratic drink.

II. INCUBUS

...when in the lighthouse late at night Tristran would leave his bed, which stood but two still steps from the queen's, and troubled Ysolt in her insomnia, and sparked fresh frights nightly in the restless king's dreams, Mark, his uncle. Sometimes he would take her as the eagle that snatches up the lamb, and his immense wings slapping her ears made her temples throb to bursting before she fainted. Or a horseman, he mounts her, and his crop.... Or now he threatens to torch the bed and her, too, in his arms. So she drifts as the pyromaniac poet articulates in a lover's whisper, fearful of waking the queen's husband Mark, who lies on the other part of the bed too frightened to wake from dreaming.

III. MARK'S COMPLAINT OF LOVE SPOKEN IN SOUND BITES

Grey water green sky Ysolt lie ever wake
Ful eyeful alpha waves kinetize
Your laughter electromesmerizes
My hearing whose voice is that god
Astral tongues the sky turns so slowly who
Hounds my solitude?

When I am dead where will you am I dead
Put me? on my hands and knees howling or
Heavenly wind-borne I rename the world
According to airy spirits' voices
And explore the sky between our minds where
Who knows what lies.

Where Ysolt what the hawk said to the legless
Lies the sky's center? serpent you take my breath
Away the fox warns the long-legged doe falls
Below the crescent moon's bow at second sight
Heaven's names become other on second hearing
Echoes of no-Thingness.

Words ears conceived inwardly I hear these sounds
In god's garden thunder wind and moonbeams
Falling the garden wall has ears the winds
Have ears to hear my intimate tongues
Love's eager saints lie down on a bed of fire
Their spirits sing out.

Words e-m-er-erge with urgent meaning
Prayerful my vowels drop at her feet frank
And simple Ysolt laughs beneath her wimple
And our voices reach the skies with wings of Art
iculate stuttering Love's utterances
Belying rhyme and reason.

IN A HOLLY THICKET

Blue and silver ribbons of silk dance at the huntsman's knees.

He whips the air above the keenest of the hounds hedging in the stag,
exhausted, its back to a holly-bound thicket.

My horse rears at the baying, and a page brings him to a stand.

Singly and by turns the hounds advance snapping at the exposed flank and,
then, retreat into the chorus of fangs. The beast responds to their dance with
nods to the foremost; it waits.

I descend. The huntsman settles the pack as I advance; unsheathe the blade
of the misericorde; drawing near, view in those tremulous eyes my twin
images; drive the knife into its heart.

A fleeting moon-disk flashes between its fallen branches.

THE MASQUE OF DIANA

...And thrice-twinning Hékate, the three faces of virgin Diana — Æneid 4.511

*In a garden enclosure concealed in the dark that discomfits my sight,
A garden still and fit for sleep
Enwrapt within the moonless night,
I awake. This black sky and dense air that surround me, enthralled by some charm,
Swift imbue my dull spirit with dreams not my own, but light borrowed, unbound,
When my Self is asleep. What mysterious harmonies, mute and unstrung!*

*I lie watching in silence, attentive to visible words a voice breathes
On my mind as night's breeze lifts the leaves: "Stranger, marvels await you unveiled
Once the moonless night above
Transforms itself to sunless day.
Be all ears and eyes, too, whilst we play for but you the diverse avatars
Of the goddess DIANA in masque. O bright Moon, pray discover your faces!*

*"Ever virgin, the huntress DIANA a vigilant shepherd held dear
And kept close in a grotto obscure that their ever-chaste longing concealed.
Her immaculate lover, embraced yet untouched, rapt her visit awaits:
'Come, Ephesian Queen, who once
Were darkness, but are now my light!'
Mind his prayer for grace, sublime light from the shadows, his eyes lit with hope.*

*"In nocturnal expanses swift LUNA prevails. Her full circuit from light
Into darkness and back by far bests all the night-shifting spheres. On the heels
Of her brother the Sun, through the ether eternal she races on high.
From her silvery chariot LUNA beholds our wan shadows below
Flitting to and fro and, soon,
Forever gone as if a dream.*

*"From underground, the Lower World,
By the third of her names is dread HÉKATE summoned through witchery's spells
And enchantment of fairies who change under cover of darkness wee babes
In their cradles. Beware, Sleeping Stranger, of demons from secret domains
That may slip in, unseen and unheard, on some crystal-clear rays of the Moon
To rob your peace, to change your dreams.*

“Black sabbath, revel, dance of witches,
O night of magic, night of changes,
I conjure you, ye shadowy spirits and underworld light, do conjoin
In the circles of Water and Fire, Earth and Air, in dark HEKATE’s name
Bind a spell: convert day into darkness, and dissipate modest reserve;
Drain off prudence through lasses’ quick ears and the mind through a lunatic’s eyes.

“Most misproud among HEKATE’s children, the imps, now appears sprightly Puck,
A pimping elf, a clever thief.
With mischief laugh his song and steps:
*‘Here a pin! there an arm! there a dwarf! here a crib! here a flame! there a barn!
In the matter of devilment, hail to Puck! master of amorous sport,
Surreptitious seducer of maids who lie dreaming and curious lads.’*

“We revisit the goddess in noon’s light. DIANA, swift mistress of hounds
And the chase, at the edge of a mountain spring daydreams at ease, undisturbed.
A naked maid, alone she bathes.
A band of silver crowns her brow.
A stray hunter, Actæon, lies low in the reeds, by the huntress unseen,
And descries, he unbidden, a scene in her fancy that warrants his death.

“As cool Water she splashes on ankles and thighs, a quick shiver of cold
Fingers, silver or gold, the same coin that the virginal Dánaë felt
When proud Zeus, to a shower of glittering metal transformed, heavy fell
Upon her breasts, upon her waist,
Upon her couch she starts from sleep.
The chaste daughter of Zeus in her reverie suspires — and Actæon, too.

“While she bends her long back in the sunlight and stretches her hands to the Earth,
She envisions the Sun’s child Pasíphaë, bowed, in the guise of a cow,
Now submitting her buttocks, exposed through the hide, to the violent probe
Of the bull that belabors her flanks. As with thunderer Jupiter’s bolts
And jolting blast and ardent dart,
The beast besets our heifer’s ’hind.

“A sphere of Air, a sphere of Fire,
The high cry of an eagle informs in her hearing an image of flight:
The boy Gánymede, comeliest youth in old Troy, aviates from his home
In the talons of Jove, here a bird, to Olympus on high; seized by a
Swoon, the boy spreads his arms with those wings that are stirring the air ’bout his ears,
The Air, where Fiery spirits sing.

“Oh what! A sound she hears, she turns
 And there concealed the hunter spies.
 Bright DIANA, in view of the outrage, displays her arms wide to his sight.
 Splendid breasts fix his gaze as she darts through her pupils a murderous beam
 That in striking his eye finds its way to the heart and transforms him in flesh
 To a stag. She halloos his own hounds, which now spring forth and tear him apart.

“Turn your eyes, Sleeping Stranger, aloft and behold where majestic She stands,
 Light-bearing Virgin, Heaven’s Queen
 Lightly borne on swan’s-down clouds.
 All emblazoned in argent and azure, She looks to the uppermost spheres.
 Sense Her aura of sanctity, boundlessly graceful, while cherubs float round.
 And this too, this fair sliver of Moon underfoot: here is LUNA’s support.”

*And no more as dream fades before day. On his radiant car PHŒBUS, god
 Of all light, of all song, joins in flight his twin sister DIANA and bride.
 Amazed and dumb I watch the Moon
 Umbriferous eclipse the Sun.*

*’Bove the Némian grove the crowned Groom and Moon veiled in conjunction concur.
 There the emblem, the goddess’ last phase, for the wedding of Magic and Verse.*

masque: a play incorporating poetry, song, & dance with masked performers; a courtly entertainment in early modern England.

Diana: goddess of the hunt, the moon (LUNA), & nature, associated with child-bearing & rearing, chastity, mutability, etc.; triple goddess along with Luna & Hekate; twin sister of Phœbus Apollo, her male counterpart, god of light, the sun, poetry, music, prophecy, etc.

Ephesian Queen: Diana’s temple at Ephesus was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. St. Paul went there to preach the gospel, but the Ephesians, crying ‘Diana of the Ephesians is great!’ drove him & his disciples from the city. The poet imagines here that the pastor-saint, bewitched, now a convert to her worship, moons over his chimeric lover.

Hekate: underworld goddess of magic & witchcraft. *Hekatos* in Greek (‘far-shooting’), a Homeric epithet of Apollo, serves as the masculine counterpart of Hekate’s name.

Puck: Shakespeare’s mischievous sprite.

Actæon: young Theban hunter & peeping Tom in Ovid’s book of changes.

Danaë: mythological Greek virgin whose father locked her in a bronze tower; Jupiter raped her; mother of Perseus.

Jupiter = Zeus = Jove

Pasiphaë: daughter of the Sun; wife of King Minos of Crete; enamored of a bull; mother of the Minotaur.

Ganymede: Trojan youth of great beauty; in the form of an eagle Jupiter abducted him; cupbearer to the Olympian gods & Jupiter’s favorite.

Heaven’s Queen: the Virgin Mary as represented in Christian art; mystical bride of Christ.

Nemian grove: woodland site near Rome of Diana’s sanctuary on the shore of the volcanic Lake Nemi, called ‘the Mirror of Diana.’

interpretations

LUNAR BLUES

After Charles Baudelaire's *'Tristesses de la Lune'*

Tonight the Moon drowns with more than her wonted
sloth like a courtesan propped on countless cushions
who, with a listless hand, fondles abstractedly
the contour of her breasts before dropping asleep.

On the snowy back of satin avalanches
she abandons herself, pining, to long-drawn sighs
and casts her indolent gaze over white billows
a bevy of swans rising forms in the Azure.

When from time to time in her languor the Moon lets
fall a furtive teardrop upon this profane orb,
a worshipful poet, foe of Sleep, piously
receives in the cup of his hand her icy tear,
'splendently iridescent relic of opal,
and hides it deep in his heart, far from the Sun's eye.

APPARITION

by Stéphane Mallarmé

The moon cast a sad soft light. Some tearful seraphs,
dreaming, bow in hand, in the calm of vaporous
flowers, were drawing from moribund violas
muted sobs that glide across the petals' azure.
— I recollect the blessed day of your first kiss:
My reverie, reveling then in self-torment,
wittingly got drunk on melancholy's sweetness
which a Dream's passage leaves behind, with no letdown
or regret, in the lone heart that bid it welcome.
So I wandered, eyes fixed on the time-worn pavement,
when with the sun bright in your hair, there in the street
at day's end, all smiles you appeared before me, you,
in my fancy, the fay with a luminous hat
who, once upon a time in my beautiful naps
of a pampered child, would pass near by as she sowed
with half-closed hands snow-white bouquets of perfumed stars.

HORACE'S 'SECULAR CHANT'

A Roman ceremonial procession performed by two virgin choirs;
sacrificants, Augustus and Agrippa; June B.C. 17

Hail! o Apollo and sylvan Diana,
Glorious light of the skies, we revere you
Now and forever. Attend to our paeon
And supplication. 4

Citing this season the Sibyl's instructions
Order that virginal children intone here
Hymns to the gods who have favored our City
And seven hillocks. 8

Generous Sol, you who usher in daylight
Daily renewed, and anew you remove it,
Heavenly charioteer, may your favor
Remain among us. 12

Duly and watchfully, triform Diana,
Care for our mothers who suffer in childbirth
— Or, if you please, let us call you Lucina
Or Genitális. 16

Goddess, bring forth and make flourish the offspring
Born of the Senate's decrees that encourage
Men to engender their kind and replenish
The State with children, 20

Whereby the secular circuit of future
Decades, eleven in count, will renew then
Three days and nights of festivities thronged with
Our children's children. 24

Always unerring, o Fates, in your forecast,
Since the predestinate course of occurrence
Brings it to being, extend our great present
To future greatness. 28

Earth, o our Mother, unboundedly fertile,
Offer to Ceres a bounteous harvest.
Jupiter, nourish the crops from your heavens
With wholesome showers. 32

Yield to the suppliant boys, o Apollo,
Placid, your arrows insheathed in their quiver.
Queen of the firmament, yield to the maidens,
O two-horned Luna. 36

Truly, if Rome be your work and the Trojans
Won the Etruscan domain, for which purpose
Under your aegis those ordered to migrate
From hearth and country 40

Fled without harm through the flames while Æneas,
Godly, outliving his city and homeland,
Led them to safety and friendlier regions
Beyond the waters; 44

Then, o Immortals, bestow on the youthful
Virtuous life, and on age, peace and wisdom;
Give to the nation of Romulus offspring
And lasting glory; 48

Grant to the line of Anchises and Venus,
Victor in battle yet kind to the vanquished,
All that we ask through our sacrifice made here
Of spotless bullocks. 52

Parthia fears both on land and at sea now
Powerful Roma. The Scythian savages,
Once so disdainful, and India, distant,
Beseech our guidance. 56

Peace and Good Faith and Repute and old-fashioned
Virtue and Manliness dare to return now.
Plenty appears with her Horn of Abundance
More rich than ever. 60

Prophet, adorned with a fulgorant bow, o
Phœbus, beloved of the Nine on Parnassus,
You who relieve by your medical science
The ailing body, 64

Gaze, as you will, on the Pálatine altars
Kindly and choose to make prosper the Roman
Senate and People through lifetimes and lustra
Forever blessed. 68

Ruling the Áventine Hill and her woodland
Shrine at Lake Némi, Diana pays heed and
Favors the prayers pronounced by the children
And Sibyl's college. 72

News of our certain good fortune I herald,
Learning that Jove and the gods will renew it.
Chorus, re-echo the praise of Apollo
And bright Diana. 76

CATULLUS 101, 'HAIL AND FAREWELL!'

A Latin elegy: the poet at his brother's tomb in the Troad

Borne through many lands and over stormy seas

For these sorrowful obsequies, brother, I come

At journey's end to pay your ashes honors due

And to speak, but in vain, to your silent remains

Since cruel Fortune cut the ties between us two,

My poor brother, alas! She bereaved me of you.

Still, these rites our forebears used in better times

To perform for loved spirits below, now accept

With all my flowing tears, fraternal tears of grief,

& for ever, my brother, & ever farewell.

