

Five Poems

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Satyr's Beard

Joe Fletcher

The sanatorium to which
I withdrew was no more
successful in curing me
than the previous ones,
and many years passed
before I slunk away again
in search of the gods
who correct our desires.

I returned to my native
land and roamed, like
a convict loosed after
an eclipse, the high chalk
downlands and scruffy
meadows, upturning
leaves of dog's mercury
in an ash grove or rinsing
at the murmuring fern-
fringed rill running past
an abandoned sheepfold.

There are in our existence
spots of matter which
nourish and visibly repair

our minds. I found this
efficacious satyr, this white
agaricon, pushing his beard,
limned dingy yellow with age,
from a mouldered gibbet
from which my father,
a murderer,
had once dangled.

While I descanted frenzied
threnodies and lamentations
upon the memory of the dead,
this tubercule penetrated
the hiding places of my power
and unperplexed me
of barren intermeddling
subtleties, making me
the gentle visitant
you now see.

Trembling Merulius

Joe Fletcher

One effect of contact
with mystery is to in-
crease the insignificance
of the things people say,
such as its name, which,
when mentioned, en-
sures that the utterer
won't ever find it,
like those apophatic
tracts of Basilides
known only by references
to them in compendious
heresiographies, or
the seeds of the fruiting
bodies included in a list
of nonexistent things.

Yet something must
tremble on the abyss
in accordance with
quivering moonlight
to produce this
effulgence glistering
out of its lurking place

in white ash seams
in a series of
semicircular caps
in contiguous rows,
resembling bacon,
lacking stalks,
shelving gradually
away.

San Isidro

Joe Fletcher

As for the inner book
of unknown symbols
carved in relief as
against an ocean bed,
no one could help me
read it, for to read it
was a creative act,
torment the Vedas
as I might to yield
a passage that would
show me the hidden
path through the home-
less voice of waters.

Though this world be
the condensed emotional
debris of the 36th Archon
who recoiled in disgust
from the horrific Yahweh
she birthed, yet on good
Saturday nights when
everything is clicking
these angels ploughing
the land can actually drag

out this stuff from another
dimension and let us play
with it, which retains
a state of incorruptibility
despite our fervent acts
of mutilation, embodied
as it is against the flow
of understanding, the pro-
visional nature of syntax
and the moving net of
language, giggling at the
pure coincidence that
our mathematics can
approximate its dynamics,
which yields the proud
and false belief in our
command of the howling
Tao. Look how it remains
steeped in dreams of a
different color, the blue
bruises like blows from
a god we cannot name,
the matutinal gold cap.