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Rock, Cloud, Scroll

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Rock, Cloud, Scroll · *Jane Augustine*

(in the Colorado mountains,
meditating on H.D.
myth-maker and inspirer of
myth-making)

ROCK ROSE

Wild roses among rocks
in sun-blached grasses
twine the cabin's split steps.

Petals infold
concealing gold stamens.
Drought crumples them.
Night frost will surely
scatter them—

yet more at morning
bloom among boulders.

Your peony-pink
is stitched on green leaf-brocade
sprung from dust.
How has desert thrust you up?
You are foreigners
born here.

Your silk spins from a harsh worm.
You flare in high wind.
Do your roots reach
down to a hidden river?

*At sundown mountains darken.
The sky fills with rose-fire clouds.*

ROCK LILY

Lily of the rocks,
lily of aspen shadows,
rare mariposa, your ivory petal-cup

streaked with subtlest purple
bends to the meadow
on a single stalk

as a wise woman averts her eyes
not needing praise.

*Delia of Miletus, priestess,
healer, speaks after death as one
who 'stood apart,'
and 'sang a secret song.'*

Lily of willow springs
lily of mountain mist
you are rooted far
from white sand
or temple column—

an offering
without shrine

WRAITHS

(on a trail to treeline)

Fog hides the peaks.
Scarves of mist drift among pines.
The dark boughs drip.

No laurels in these woods,
no spirit's scented flower-breath.
The stream runs cold

and rough. It speaks
of nothing beyond itself. It eats away
the trail beside it.

Deeper woods.

An old mine
shaft—human remnant—fills with dirt
under a fallen fir-trunk—

after that no trace
of construct or precursor.

Harder rain.

Wet trees stand
in the path, wraiths black but veiled.
I fade into their landscape, insubstantial,

present by absence.
No deity, shrine nor scripture,
crucible nor angel
but her seeking mind remembered

and these shape-shifters, pale
behind cracked branches, draw me on—

*Rock creates the fall of water,
air its dispersion,
earth its catch-basin.*

*Formless runnels
form cross-trails.
Mud hollows hold
a momentary silver,*

*sky-mirror,
light-giver,*

*incessant
reformation of water.*

SKY

(haiku after Ryokan, mountain hermit, moon poet)

Blue blue blue o blue
blue blue blue sky of emptiness—
deepest blue intensest

blue of turquoise buried
under most ancient rock blue
of transient lupine,

drooping harebell at
lake's rim two miles high in blue
air where fossil shells

imprint the granite—
blue o blue over these peaks
once sea-bottom, your height

depth endless, 'nothing
whatever yet everything
comes of it.' Water

in blue tarns above
treeline covers pearly stones
that sink from sight as

mountains rise to hide
in clouds that lie on those blue
mirrors. Sky, water,

rock self-existing,
twined in utter difference,
open mystery

— 'not why it is but
that it is' — that mind can see
as word and woman

in one hieroglyph:
she is the writing herself

— and light to read it.

Now

Light changes:
gray in the cabin window.
Thunder rumbles and the power goes off

a moment. Mountains make weather. Now
hail pummels stovepipe and roof,
then blatant

sun creates
leaf-shine in wet scrub oak.
This transience, this rough-walled one plain room

bind and drive one's thought. Rock roses' blooming
passed but left leaf and thorn,
grubstake

for another season.

My heroines
work alone. 'Mountain Charley'
put on men's clothes, shipped on a Mississippi river-

gambler's boat, went west, panned gold in Victor,
Cripple Creek, sent money
back to St. Louis nuns

to pay for
her daughters' convent schooling.
She was eighteen and widowed. She had no way to live

but crudely, in disguise.
No myth,
this history hacks itself out in unruly
shapes.

My west, how have you written me?

Now you, shape-shifter,
name-changer,
in Helen's white chiton
girdled with purple
of mountain gentian,

haunt my crude refuge.

No myth but you,
disguised by names,
initials, images of sea,
wind, sand, of poppy-flame,

 you meet my mind
with mind
nowhere, yet here on uneven
rock that rises
distant, distant to the mountain

 shrouded
in cloud.
No Fuji or Olympus. Still,
eidolon, for you
an offering:

 this effort,
watercolor
of the pale yellow
rippled under-edge of thunderhead,
sun held a moment in end-glow:

this scroll.