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Three Poems · Judith Berke

REPRESSION IN THE AGE OF AQUARIUS

My friend says, when his pretty student visits, paintings fly off the walls, and once one of the little big-bellied goddesses, the way a button would pop from a too-tight vest. Brilliant, he said, when she entered his night class. . . . I don’t tell him the brilliance seems to be mostly in her hips, how they beat out the time like a pendulum, as if to say Listen, nobody’s got forever! No. I go on about Freud. The noises in his walls. How he had to track them down as if they were the repressed thoughts of a patient. How Jung preferred to think they were simpler than that. Further off, yet in a funny way, closer.

My friend and his little sweetheart have hardly touched, ever. You’d almost think one of them would go deaf, or begin to stutter—but no, it’s the poor walls going crazy. . . . Now a spear comes down, and the African mask next to it. I like to attach to all this notions of love. That if they kissed, just gently, the room would be all right again. I don’t know anymore what love is, but I would like this to be about love. Not just the wild part, the eros, not only the spear and the mask as if that were all that mattered.