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Abundance and Satisfaction

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1.
One butterfly is not enough. We need many thousands of them, if only for the effusion of the wayward- swaying words they occasion—blue and copper hairstreaks, sulphur and cabbage whites, brimstones, peacock fritillaries, tortoiseshell emperors, skippers, meadow browns. We need a multitude of butterflies right on the tongue simply to be able to speak with a varied six-pinned poise and particularity.

But thousands of butterflies are surfeit. We need just one flitter to apprehend correctly the will of aspen leaves, the lassitude of lupine petals, the sleep of a sleeping eyelid. To examine adequately one set of finely leaded, stained wings of violet translucence, one single sucking proboscis (sap- and-sugar-licking thread), to study thoroughly just one powder scale, one gold speck from one dusted butterfly forewing would require at least a millenium of attention to all melody, phrase, gravity and horizon.
2.
And just the same, one moon is more
than sufficient, ample complexity
and bewilderment—single waning crescent,
waxing crescent, lone gibbous, one perfect,
solitary sickle and pearl, one map
of mountains and lava plains, Mare
Nectaris, Crater Tycho. And how could
anyone really hold more than one full
moon in one heart?

Yet one moon is not enough. We need
millions of moons, glossy porcelain
globes glowing as if from the inside out,
weaving among each other in the sky
like lanterns bobbing on a black river
sea-bound. Then we could study
moons and the traversings of moons
and the multiple meanings of the phases
of moons, and the eclipsing of moons
by one another. We need a new language
of moons containing all the syllables
of interacting rocks of light
so that we might fully understand,
at last, the phrase ‘one heart
in many moons.’

3.
And of gods, we need just one, one
for the grief of twenty snow geese
frozen by their feet in ice and dead
above winter water. Yet we need twenty-
times-twenty gods for all the recurring
memories of twenty snow geese frozen
by their feet in sharp lake-water ice.
But a single god suffices
for the union of joys in one school
of invisible green-brown minnows
flocking over green-brown stones
in a clear spring, but three gods
are required to wind and unwind
the braided urging of spring—root,
blossom and spore. And we need
the one brother of gods for a fragged
plain, blizzard-split, battered
by tumbleweeds and wire fences,
and the one sister to mind
the million sparks and explosions
of gods on fire in a pine forest.

I want one god to be both scatter
and pillar, one to explain simultaneously
mercy and derision, yet a legion of gods
for the spools of confusion and design,
but one god alone to hold me by the waist,
to rumble and quake in my ear, to dance me
round and round, one couple with forty
gods in the heavenly background
with forty violins with one
immortal baton keeping time.