

Abundance and Satisfaction

Pattiann Rogers

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.