

Keith Walton

First Cut

Brimstone Press



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Walking alone in the Parnassos Mountains

the silence

is a block of marble

on which sounds scratch

but do not leave a mark

yet when I cry out the mountains

become a bowl

of finest alabaster

around which my voice travels

to the last

faint

echo

Sunrise from Likavittos

Stamped steel, flexing like razor blades,
sickle clean, with hooligan whistles the swifts swarm in,
snap past, circling with consuming intent the moths
quivering at the light.

Too many moths: shaking in ecstasies, yearning,
ardent as acolytes, needy as fans. And sinister:
 fat fur bodies, unearthly susurrus
 of myriad soft wings, fluttering...;
 rebellious stained angels halting in their nine-day fall
 for just one night, one last grasp at light...;
 critical massing to a group mind,
 a protean malign shape....

Wall dark dissolves to cloud dark.
Waves of non-dark wash dark from the air successively,
reveal transparency; and black marks in the distance.
The moths loosen their grip,
uncertain in their love of light between two lights.
Some float away. Most cling on –
faith superseding sense? Or simply waiting sense's
switch from light to light....
The swifts arrive. The light goes out.

Magnet of light switched off, the moths drift,
stretching in ambient light, floating,
vigil completed, night's ecstasy over.
The swifts' steel-sprung precision picks them off,
their mazy flight no match for arrowed certainty;
soft 'dop', moustache mouth, swerve away;
from every angle they stab the air clean; and disappear.
The air is empty. There is silence.
A bloody eyeball heaves into view.

Camargue flamingos

Their heads are magnolia buds about to bloom
this swaying bunch of strange flowers.

All curves, two, face to face, touch, make suddenly a heart –
but bonily clash beaks and shriek outlandishly.

On knitting needle legs they step, carefully,
as if between their own eggs.

They plunge pink heads into the mud
pull up stained brown, fierce-eyed, fed, and plunge again.

One, a broken parasol opening, flaming paper rising, lifts
resolves into a flying machine with too-short wings
that whirr too fast, neck stretched, legs trailing, makes
a circuit of the lake, as if to test in air the separateness of itself,
spreads like a parachute descending, reaches through water,
mud,
settles back, folding, into the place it's just left.