

19/19

Kim Minkus & Ted Byrne

1

Wooden goddess now laughs
then aims her arrows at my heart

thinking of you or stealing into your home
Diana turned to me and yelled
take him he is yours
use all of your weapons

so I did and you left me
torn into pieces
alone with ravenous bitches

2

Wooden laughter the stuff of arrows
unheartened by her well-knit critique
her bow drawn back across her lyre
hurling words (chorus of Valley girls)
or let's say advice before the act
not as I recall it (ananke)
but let's say she put me in your hands
I faded and fell like table scraps
into the mouths of these non-suitors

3

Shifted points aim for my heart
oh her and her songs
does she not hunt

she plays with words stung with points
and her backup singers are yelling off-kilter
their dance out of sync

they can't hear me screaming at his window
mouthing lyrics of something unsung
a hag if ever there was one

4

The arrows of time bother my heart
making point after point on target
as if song were reasoning in its play
and dancing round her their feet were thoughts

Dancing round Artemis without me
tearing at her shift as if to find
an ugliness beneath heart's wisdom

Cursing at cross purposes he leans
forgetfully over the alley

5

After minutes of raucous laughter
 disrupted studies and worries
 I ponder my middle position
 as she twirls and spins *en pointe*

Dancing away on lovely legs
 it is easy for her
 to forget how the heart aches

An arrow yoked to each of us
 headlong and panting

6

Periodically emerging from
 dense study into anxious laughter
 the dancers again in my surround
 I dreamt along forgotten small feet
 long legs my past my cheaters my looks

Am I Diana or Actéon
 trop coupable à courre la déesse*
 Unarmed or armed in every flexion
 taking for hope arrows direction

*Lacan, *La Chose Freudienne*:

Car la vérité s'y avère complexe par essence, humble en ses offices et étrangère à la réalité, insoumise au choix du sexe, parente de la mort et, à tout prendre, plutôt inhumaine, Diane peut-être... Actéon trop coupable à courre la déesse, proie où se prend, veneur, l'ombre que tu deviens, laisse la meute aller sans que ton pas se presse, Diane à ce qu'ils vaudront reconnaître les chiens...

7

I'm always prowling
those tutelary steps avoided
for celestial abodes
a burning shaman
collecting spirits to rub

My bow is an ecstatic vocation
in tantric circles I release my arrows
singing fragments of love
infernal hound I wait for an invitation

8

O Diane poke your retroussé nose
joy some from the thick damp leafage
Don't look up it'll start raining
Don't look down your feet will be trammeled

Look around me and the other nymphs
will scatter lose our way in mystery
unprotected by your dogs of love
your smiling knees rubbing together
your slow circling prow with arm drawn back

9

Half listing I tickle my nose with greenery
My bow muffled I rejoice in my silence
I have taken many steps in the rain
the sweetness of sand on my feet

Though these nymphs continue to mock me
And paw at my sugared feet
It is you with your melting tongue
whose chant entices the goddess Diane
See how steady how still my draw as I listen

10

Une saynète: l'innamoramanto

This little scene has three partitions
and four characters who come and go
(not to mention the chorus of nymphs)
Let's call them she her he him (and they)

She can hardly hide her timidity
It shows itself in silence and wrath
He has to ask what happened to her
Unlike her she'd simply disarm him
(They all laugh and disenchant the scene)

11

(a phantasmagory)

Diana scowls at the character's antics
The nymphs irritate her
She can't hear the dialogue while they chatter
and wonders if she was meant to laugh

So throwing off her emerald crown
instead she leans on memory
Arrows of pain singe her heart
remembering the sly beast whose lips licked her with fire
Was any love stronger or stranger?

12

simulaverat artem ingenio natura suo

I remember Diana unarmed
naked in her pool surrounded by nymphs
who disarm her disrobe her soap her limbs
rise about her like a robe of flesh
shield her from the gaze of Acteon

Her height reveals her naked above them
cheeks rosy red as a morning cloud
she throws handfuls of water in his face
turns him from witness to voiceless prey

13

a translation

Diana from dark woods drenched in gore
pulled to her bath by a corps of nymphs

lost in unthought I wandered far
until a voice called me to reason
Hey you where do you think you're going
out of order out of rank unarmed

Oh Sir it wasn't hardly my fault
every shot misfired every thrust fell short
I was disarmed and beat by love

14

Without thinking with no tenderness or care
Diana scrubs at her flesh
Astonished I wait for her to recognize me
–the nymph with the golden tongue
full of wrath and hunting my predator

Lost I drifted into her sacred wood
part hatred part fear leading me
then I see Her vulnerable subdued
a nymph herself for an unknown master

15

meeting Diana

She stabs into her prey and rips out its heart
then holds the bloody mass to my lips

like a witch's wishing apple I take a bite
and clasping my quivering hands she pulls me to her bath
her bath water now crimson
her nymphs carrion flowers

I am bloody and pale
as if shot by my enemy
love my burden guilt my sorrow

16

(ai Fideli d'Amore)

Knowing nothing of love and still less
of need she tries to scrub off the stain
my lyric tongue left on the surface
of her sensible thoughts her ardour
and her shame

O Diane it's Eros
my beating heart in his open hand
offered to your cannibal love

Now as one writer to another
I ask can you explain this away

17

Heu miser! quia frequenter impeditus ero deinceps

Stained and succulent with desire
you writer! ask me an unanswerable question
Everybody knows the doubleness of dreams
In the ninth hour Diane and Eros united against me
Or is it my own heart I devour in fear
and quenched I reproach my burning love
let me choke on what is left of it
take your sadness with you
leave me to dance with the bloody nymphs

18

Hey mister! queer frequenter impede
us Eros unborn and Diana
no more airy sprite and femme fatale
as if questions had no answer here

But don't petition your dreams they lie
like pond scum between the deep and the
forever of fire wind and sorrow

Let's ask the nymphs who their master is
who does and undoes their tiny eyes

19

Diane takes espresso from a boy
after hours a beastly assignation
at the Nymph's Crown where she pays the bill
and buys the love of this fay creature

Sense or weight of joy's voice calls her out
from a country of flesh made prayer
from her divinization untarnished
and back to the centre of the woods

19/19 consists of nineteen wild versions of Sonnet XIX from Louise Labé's sequence of twenty-four sonnets. The poems were written separately, and responsively, except for the last one, which we composed together by alternating lines. This work has its origins in Ted Byrne's Sonnets: Louise Labé (Nomados 2011) and Kim Minkus' response to that work, "24 Nonets," published in her book Tuft (Bookthug 2013).