

DRIFT
BODY
ONE

Drift Body One

Beltane 2021

C.S. Mills

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There is a spring at the right side,
and standing by it a white cypress.
Descending to it, the souls of the dead refresh themselves.
Do not even go near this spring!
Ahead you will find from the Lake of Memory,
cold water pouring forth; there are guards before it.
They will ask you, with astute wisdom,
what you are seeking in the darkness of murky Hades.
Say, *I am a son of Earth and starry Sky,*
I am parched with thirst and am dying; but quickly grant me
cold water from the Lake of Memory to drink.

From an Orphic gold tablet, ca 400 BCE, found in a cist-grave in Calabria,
Italy. (This and the two other inscriptions translated from the Greek by
Sarah Iles Johnston.)

Emptying

Drift is the body
of a dismembered god
laid out on bedrock:

scattered gravel, scattered
sand, silt, dust clay and
crushed bone

In the body,
darkness enwraps
the sacred things

All-Mineral,
scattered god;

glacier

whose
memory empties to drift
and
wells in
places still
now



Yes Ice empties
to moraine and kettle
(as wind to dune,
wave to shore)

Then only empty can mineral
know
soil
 fiber
 flesh

Only can an empty vessel
gather only can
a scattered body
take shape

Only in
disintegration,
persistence



A god so
drawn to flesh as to
let memory melt
to drift

Flesh,
that breath
to mineral



Wind flows over
land blooms over
moraine eddies in
valley;
breath in
the body

Wind mirrors and distorts
both
moraine and
valley overhead a projection
both
familiar and un-
familiar

Grasp land and pull
to resemble bloom or
eddy and see
projection grow
only
ever more unfamiliar ahead
of our grasp

Bloom of wind over
stone inverts to eddy
in hollow of sand hand
both
convex and concave
depending
on gesture

We grasp at
something grasping
drives away



Descend to bed of deepest kettle
where marl in darkness enwraps
body enwraps bone

There two springs:
one called Careless,
another Persistent

The first pass it the other
drink from it

One swallows light,
but in the other it glints
from beneath the tongue

Deeper still beneath
deepest marl
 waters join;

Careless and Persistent
two phases of one body



Drift rests in self-
similar symmetry:
boulder to pebble to
tumbled grain

All-Mineral;
 fractal god

Start anywhere and follow
to non-orientable extremes,

 to cosmos;

as fragment,
so whole

As memory,
so body

I am parched with thirst and am dying; but grant me to drink
from the ever-flowing spring on the right, where the cypress is.
Who are you? Where are you from? I am a daughter of Earth and
starry Sky.

From an Orphic gold tablet, ca 200 BCE, found near Mylopatamos, Crete.
The lunate tablet likely covered the initiate's mouth.

Strix seraph

From the drift at dusk six
white wings rise to the sky:
two held aloft two
outward and two
enwrapping the body
beneath golden eyes.

Who are you?

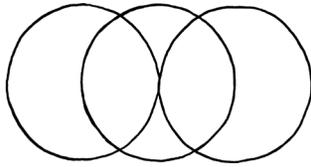
In the sand five
anomalous stones shaped
each by six
winds to prismatic hexagon,
each black as deep water
through thin ice black
as biding screen.

*Where are
you from?*

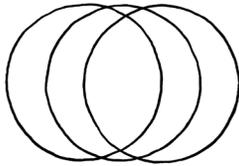
Six silent wings two
golden discs five
black doors into the drift;

each
a beckoning wound
in the body beneath.

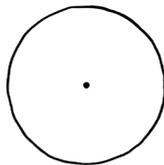
Six lines up
from the ground
to that silent,
hovering
haecceity.



Hexagon's three
circles collapse
to



one imaginal disc



around which
the scattered body
can take shape.

I have flown out of the heavy, difficult circle,
I have approached the longed-for crown with swift feet,
I have sunk beneath the breast of the Lady, the Chthonian Queen,
I have approached the longed-for crown with swift feet.
Happy and blessed, you will be a god instead of a mortal.
A kid I fell into milk.

From an Orphic gold tablet, ca 400 BCE, found in a tumulus in Thurii,
Italy. The rectangular tablet was found folded in the initiate's right hand.

Commons

What do I, as a human person, hold in common with an owl? With a pine? With basalt, wind and water? What constitutes the commons that webs through each and among all? We have a habit of dismissing this question, looking away in embarrassment, but it remains. Any commons at all can seem distant or dashed in this time of profoundly modern fragmentation, but still the sense of it remains, and so we ask.

Our modern attitude—reductive, cause-enthralled, levering—is certainly unfriendly to anything held in common. Despite its awesome and amply-demonstrated power, the modern attitude is simultaneously dismissive and paranoid of any movement in that direction. Of course it is; the commons is a pool in which we might glimpse the hubris we wear mantle-like, and we are haunted today by nothing so much as the possibility of having to reconcile power with reflection.

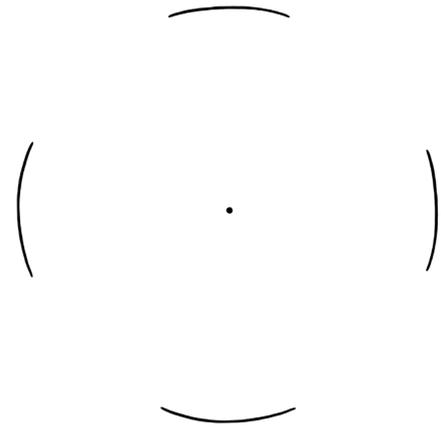
But what is it, this thing we shy from but still hold in common? It is held at the very center of each body—biotic, mineral and fluvial alike—enwrapped there, and it is utterly complete. Not a separate, moted completeness, but a fractal completeness. We might call it *haecceity*, thisness; or quietude, or darkness. I call it silence. Silence is what we hold in common, and silence, I believe, is what we refer to when we speak of the commons. It is that pool in which we see reflected the self-similar image of all else.

If we choose to look at things symbolically, with a medieval gaze, so to speak, rather than the modern one we've been restricted to, the self-similar image appears no longer threatening, but charged and fascinating. We glimpse it in the circular pool, and then

it rises to our attention in countless forms all around us in the world, so often as more circles. Jung wrote of the circular symbol as one of wholeness, as God-image. When we settle the gaze we can see the possibility of wholeness dwelling within—within our bodies and others alike—rather than stalking the margins. The circle hints at a healing of the modern-medieval split.

On the moraine amid the dunes, atop the drift body, I encounter circles wherever I turn: in sand-grain tumbled to sphere, ring inscribed in sand by nib of grass, windworn boulder. In owl's golden eye, plover's sandspeckle egg nestled in a cup of white stones; in the arc of horizon curving dizzily on two planes, at whose center I apparently stand. Each if these is an image of wholeness, holiness, a particular silence nested amid manifold fractal silences. In my little sphere of time and space, these circular images encountered on the moraine are—like Jung wrote of the flying saucer in 1958—symbols 'best suited to compensate the split-mindedness of our age'. They can and will be found anywhere we look, and indeed wherever we don't.

Yes, the commons is a silence that webs through each and all, which far from being distant or dashed is right here. The cosmos coheres in it.



Sources

Johnston, Sarah Iles and Fritz Graf. *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife: Orpheus and the Bacchic Gold Tablets*. United Kingdom: Routledge, 2007.

Jung, C.G. *Flying Saucers: A Modern Myth of Things Seen in the Skies*. (From Vols. 10 and 18, *Collected Works*). Translated by R.F.C Hull. Princeton University Press, 1978.

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The land on which I write and walk and sleep is stolen, and I thank the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians for allowing me to make my home here. To my fellow settlers: we have chosen to drink from the spring called Careless for plenty long!

Ever so many thanks to the people who have subscribed to this zine. Your support and attention reciprocates the energy I put into this otherwise uneconomic endeavor of writing poems.

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