

January 2021

Three Poems

Whit Griffin

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Recommended Citation

Griffin, Whit (2021) "Three Poems," *Yalobusha Review*: Vol. 20 , Article 11.
Available at: <https://egrove.olemiss.edu/yr/vol20/iss1/11>

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THREE POEMS

Whit Griffin

BITING THE IVORY SCEPTER

Like crustaceans that copulate when the figs begin to ripen. It's a tattoo, not a stigmata. A year of penance is three thousand lashes. *Hercules had not his club, and his right leg and arm were extended.* Dolphins make better allies. Running animals are a good sign. The algal bloom means an abundance of flamingoes. The tongues of flamingoes are a glutton's delicacy. *When I shall have a fat turtle-dove, good-bye, lettuce.* Lettuce useful for relaxing. Saladin presented his royal captive with a cup of sherbet, cooled in snow. *The sherbet of Egypt was his common drink.* The hoof stroke of Pegasus created the fountain of the Muses. Jupiter's eagle carried off Ganymede. Domitian gave Janus four faces. Pollux invented boxing. *So a stag's breath sucks up a clammy snake.* Let us bury alive our infirm and useless parents.

WALKING STICK MAKES THE LEAF DISAPPEAR

Fresh discoveries on the slow local train. New paths to the old gods. Agriculture cut us off from so many spirits. Osmunda from Osmunder, the Saxon Thor. Thirty-nine fern acquaintances in Rutland County. Ostrich

fern on the banks of the Hoosick
 River. Hart's Tongue at Chittenango
 Falls. Lunary to Martagon. Martagon
 to Moonwort. Moonwort will unlock
 the dwelling-house. Maidenhair not
 meadow rue. *What shall be our food?
 Shall shellfish and fern-root? That
 is the root of the earth; that is the food
 to satisfy man; the tongues grow by reason
 of the licking, as if it were the tongue of a dog.*
 So early in the journey. Goose grass
 flour for the goddess of grains. Jimson
 weed to Jamestown – a weed the natives
 said would only grow around the whites.
*It surely belongs to his Satanic majesty and
 it is a little tomato.* There is no milk and it
 behaves like a pole bean. Beans, the food of
 artisans. En-ki, Lord Love, man's friend and
 protector. God of wisdom, magic and medicine.
 En-lil, Lord Breath, the life-giving wind.
 Also the destroying hurricane. Wind carried
 off its color. And the deer ran in circles
 around them.

AS THE SALO TEMPERS IRON

Procne was turned into a swallow
 for slaying her son. Harmonia and
 her husband were turned into stone
 serpents. The lion is androgynous.
 The green lion, also the serpent,
 acid water, vinegar. Where the moist
 heat of horse shit acted as a uterus.
 Where it was once thought manure
 played a critical role in resurrection.
 Coprolite – fossilized feces. The warmth
 of the hand brings out the fragrance
 of amber. *Finished is what I have said*

about the work of the sun. As the sun
was Medea's grandfather. The dove
granddaughters of Zarax. *Let the sun
be my witness and Phasis the king of
our rivers.* River gods are represented
with horns. No part of the ibis has
survived. The Pygmies of the upper Nile
were warred on and destroyed by cranes.

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Whit Griffin is the author, most recently, of *A Far-Shining Crystal* (Cultural Society, 2013). Poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Golden Handcuffs Review*, *LUNGFULL!*, and *Hambone*. He currently lives in Memphis.