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A Child

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a trepak of trumpets
and the top burst open with a whiff of meringue and fluff.
Slowly out of it rose from the foam
a glittering pink Venus naked like a salmon,
clutching her rudimentaries with a coy aplomb.
And then it was ended with a spectral spotlight
clinging to her rump like a pearly tear.

That was the way of it as we remember.
Now we sit at a table of crumbs
with a used coffee cup and a soiled spoon
in a wilderness of stained and rumpled linen,
watched by a lean disapproving lackey.
He curls and uncurls his lip like Savonarola
about any minute to wheel the rest of it away.
Shall we curse him in scatological salvos like competition
spit on his ruffled sleeves
take his lace in our teeth
cast him in dirt, throw dirt on him
withhold his tip?
How much splendor can you replace with meanness?
No we'll watch in peace as he drags away the last saucer,
even flick a lying smile to him which he'll return.
We'll act as though we were giving each other a gift.

A Child / Andrew Glaze

“There is perhaps no one of our natural passions so hard to subdue
as pride . . . even if I could conceive that I had completely overcome
it, I should probably be proud of my humility . . .”

Benjamin Franklin, *Autobiography*

There was no way to give it birth,
no way to have conceived it.
Still, there it basked in the sun of your insides
like a camel.
It spat at your pyramids,
gorged all you ate,

flexed your blood in its knees,
kicked your curbstone
with its pragmatic boot,
stared like a horn-rimmed astronomer
through the goggles of your eyes.
Fiercely, one night,
forcing itself out
through the knuckle of your first finger,
it lay there panting on the paper like a beast.
It was winglike. With one whiff
you could have blown it away forever.
But who then would have mourned it
in its wanderings? And it came from you,
and was your risk. Traitor pity
said you must adopt it. Traitor love
told you to feed it with wishes.
Secretly you made it your own, by choice.

Shades / Jon Silkin

Cheviot: makes silence of
life's bare soft maximum,

fluxing not much. No, hangs

its milky fluid in
Henhole's vacancy; plump

bellies of cinquefoil mixed
with the Barren Strawberry ooze

their lobed flesh at the cleft
Cheviot turns into;

and through the soft
crushed odours, what trees?