

THE DOGS (First Agaricus Ode)

for Lissa Wolsak

Peter O'Leary

Blood-gushered mountainside a brass parapegma of noon
glares behind: gore of hides. Beasts all slain. Shadeless midday.

Specterless
differentiation. Glad day zodiacs augur. Awl of insight; hunters'
blades. Actaeon: and the spirits of motion. Actaeon
uttering:

*::invisible solar stellatum : blue daytime::
::chalcedony, hyacinth, opal, sapphire, slate::
::Crystal. Ash. Hyacinth.::*

Lads. We've had luck our nets and spears
are dripping with. Fortune's thirst for blood quenched.
The chariot's an auroral throne dawn radiates from,
a furnace of ruby ore noon roars out from. We're done.
We'll kill again tomorrow, tracking board through these
trackless wastes. Let's go home and roast these hams.

Actaeon's men. Dragging together the nets to bind them. Ceasing.

A valley there. Dense with pine. With cypress. Called Gargaphie.
Diana's holy retreat. In whose hidden Arcanum a grotto.
Creased green with shade. No hand could have made it.
But Nature makes art—imitating herself. An arch of living rock.
Soft tufa. Effervescing source. On the left. A stream—
waving, lucid—sounding out. And pooling. Where
spears of grasses natter. Here's where the virgin of the wild
woods bathes. Crystal waters. Green shade. One nymph
holds her hunting spear. Holds her epic bow. One nymph takes
her robe. And two nymphs unbind the sandals from her feet.
And one Theban nymph whose fingers are nimblest quickly knots
Diana's unbraided hair streaming in the swishing cooler air. Of the
grove.

Other nymphs bring the urns. Steaming with water. Let's call them:
Wooly Milk Cap. And Velvet Stem. And Elm Oyster. And Slippery
Jill. And Black Trumpet.

And Titania bathes. She's splendid. Completely. Unlike any other
being.

But Cadmus' scion—Actaeon. There he is. His senses relaxing.
Dilating.

Stepping uncertainly. In woods he doesn't know. Entering that holy
grove.
Fate's firebrand his torch. Flare in the vernal shadow. He's *there*.
They see him.

Furious percussions on the air. As they thrum their breastbones.
Helicoptering sound. Arms in shocking, sudden motion. All of them
ululating. Shrill pitch sirening atop woofered chopping.
They're all nude. Quick—they try to cover Diana with their bodies.
But she's immense. A towering beauty! Like Dawn's incoming
redness.
Light sunlight's silver-tipped spears. Like a new unanticipated
thought.
Changing your life forever. She radiates. At him. Everlasting.
Eternity's
involuntary taste. It shocks him. She's unarmed and can't kill him.
Water: she flicks it at him instead. Sprinkles him with wicked doom.
Look at me. Sound of several octaves. Sounded at once. A deity's
fantastic vocalizing.
Tell someone. What you've seen. I dare you. In his skull's protein's:
the water's
tendrils root their curse. Actaeon's head—it aches. A migraine's
lightning
actualized as antlers. Stag's horns. His jawbone narrows, extends.
Fingers
harden into hoofs; hands densify, tighten. His arms—slender legs.
His legs—tremble with a frightened gait, awakened.
His body—a maculate, velvety hide. At last she adds
to his heart startled fear. At that, he rips through the woods.
So nimble! So fast. Time vanishes. In his freedom.
A shimmering pool. Vision of his rack of horns. "Misery!" A word
as animalian moan.
Weeping. Lachrymose tantrum of his unchanged mind. Its shames.
Flowing into form.
His form—charging on in fear. Impeded. Timorous. Running.

Dogs. Hexagons of sunlight they shatter in their mad dash.
Dogs. His fucking dogs. On the run. First comes Black-foot,
an elegant Spartan deerhound, lunging in strides his anatomy's
hippodrome urges; and next courses Helltrail whuffing like a
Cretan mare. Velocity's roar. Humming aura of lurches and panting.
Next, the Arcadians: Born of Thunder; Faux Pax; and Torrent.
Elf-Slayer. Dart. Rieter. Shog. Deadly Galerina. Wood Rot.
Fumerol.
Like a fresh gush of thought, like a havoc of inspiration: Earthstar,
Death Liquor.

Demon Tiger. Demon Dragon. Shriill-tongued Hylactor. Swift
Horror.
Rudiment. Dynamite. Kindler and his sister Acid. Ash. And more.
The whole pack. Turbid. Lusting for blood. Pouring over rocks. Over
cliffs. Over hard ways scents should vanish from. After *him!* His best
dogs.

His pleas to his dogs: a stag's braying. They charge
eagerly after. Actaeon submerged in animal. All verb. All summons.
Resonant aether. It's the Black Slayer first. Plunging his fangs into
the shoulder's tensing muscle. Next Gasher. And last Tusk. Homeric
animal—lunging, murdering jaw. Cunning fucking dogs. Lashing
out across
the mountain. First to maul: first to be praised. The stag their master
is down. Gyrus of his wild eyes. Law of death he registers. Its
gnostic instant. Fury of the pack quickly come. Slashing his hide.
Piercing
every inch of flesh. Havoc of vulnus. Garish of wounds. Sound he
makes:
no stag's, no man's. His buckled knees—a glimpse of prayer.
A master's supplication. The futile petitions of his crew.
Actaeon's absence: His mind's mad terminal dancing. And the dogs.
Throning him on every side. Thrusting their muzzles in his flesh.
Mangling their master. Under the stag's false form. Only his wounds
quench the moon-goddess' murderous luminous rage: rumor's
ambiguous violence. Summer rainstorm's incessant hiss and thunder.

After Ovid

Peter O'Leary recently edited John Taggart's *Is Music: Selected Poems* (Copper Canyon 2010) and published *Luminous Epinoia* (Cultural Society 2010).