

Conversation Pieces
Volume 38

Numa

An Epic Poem
by
Katrinka Moore





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Publication Acknowledgments

Otoliths: “Nothing,” “Naps,” “Opens,” “Sees (Turns her head),”
“Hatches,” “Meanders,” “Lingers,” “Shifts (Bear),” “Rises (sun-
sleepy),” “Unfolds,” “Apex,” “Body,” “Fire,” “Umbra,” “Genera-
tion (river dives),” “Sees (night storm),” “Dream,” “Monster,”
“Mingles”; photo collages on pages 2, 34, 50, 64

brevitas: “Careens,” “Floats,” “Water light,” “Being,” “Cache,”
“Generation (runnel to river, a small body),” “Hears,” “Axis,”
“Generation (Restless)”

First Literary Review East: “First light,” “Tangle,” “Journey”

MungBeing: “Breeze,” “Lightning,” “Scatters (unbodied)”; photo
collage page 56

Möbius: “Scatters (a small body),” “Schist”

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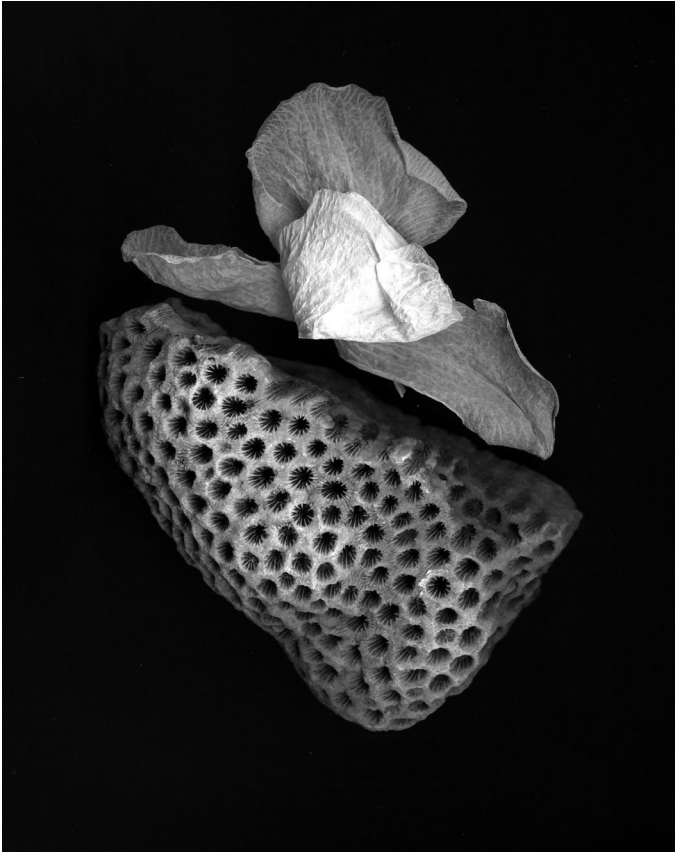
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*Some, when transform'd, fix in the lasting change;
Some, more deft, thro' various figures range.*

Nothing

stays / shapes
shift / becoming
always / always
in motion / nothing
settled, everlasting
shuffle & stir / in-
complete / flawed /
ravishing



I Becoming

Naps

However you imagine her, asleep
she folds in on herself fawn-like, puma
tail curled to her chin.

Opens

On a high
branch of a cedar, waxwings
nest-build — twigs, grass, fluff —
send down whistles & flickers
of light to the sleeper, who opens
her eyes. A shadow crosses as
one bird dives snatches
a tangle of shed fur &
zigzags up touching nothing.

Sees

Turns her head to the left, turns
 it to the right, lifts chin, glances
 up, pivots to see behind. Countless
 light-arrows radiate in, drawn
 from distances no one knows — no
 front down back up — field
 of directions leaving south east
 west north in the dust.



Hatches

Numa weaves through the forest
four-legged but wings
flap close to her temples. Slows
beneath river-bottom pines.

Clears a circle, sweeps away
needles, digs a fox hole.

(birds she's eaten crunching
tiny bones spitting out
beak texture of claws)

Begins by rolling into
an egg-shape, growing
a shell.



bird's head on
a young girl's
body / feathery
crest, yellow-
tipped / thin fast
downy legs hop
from one
foot to the
other / a berry
in her hand



back to her body / she
crouches / tail
switching / watches
a rowdy flock skim
the shallows / snap-
ping up dragonflies



Meanders

Ambles, pads, sniffs. Comes
 to a brake deep in ferns, dives &
 tumbles under cover, soft, low, thick with
 fronds. Rolls in the tangle, lies still (un-
 seen) wheels, wallows. Underbrush
 sways over body invisible, so feathery
 dense a layer of life carries on
 at ground level, untouched until
 now: smasher, scatterer, undulator.



Careens

down
brambled
slope, trips
over hidden
logs, skirts
snags still
standing, skids
into wet ground —
water seeps, pools,
reflects. The dark
light of the woods.

Lingers

Owl, predator herself, stays
out of reach. Nods. An
interval, silent together, as
sounds around them ebb. Child-
numen — restless — bounds —
the bird lifts off — beat of wings
& through the trees a rising
murmur buzz snort
jabber caw ululation.

Approaches

Stand
 of white
 birches, trunks
 tilted, tops leaning on
 one another, lopsided
 frame : wide-open
 windows, airy walls — a pushing
 up, a pulling down — unhurried
 balance to imbalance
 hidling haven
 for trial error



Shifts

Bear is adverse
to imitation / *careless*
numen, callow demi
god / holds with slow
honing, time biding

best to keep
a distance / try
something grand
out of sight / in
secret / ripen
ruggedize

comes out sketchy / more
critter than beast / tucked
inside rib bones, damp &
warm / knocked-about
passenger within black-
furred lumberer

blunder
has to run its course / bide



licks her fur / visceral
sediment / licks away
muck & bile / pulls
apart sticky clumps
of hair / now

sound / springs up
sanguine / hopeful /
hungry



girlchild raccoon nibbles
dew- & raspberries / rises
on hind legs / paw-
hands grabbing / this
delicious life / this
summer

Rises

sun-sleepy / she dissolves
to air / balmy, floating /
turns to wind / skims
brush / scoots around
trunks / shimmers
a thousand leaves / flies
skyward / sails / herds
cumulus / bumps
into nimbus / cools
off / drops down

Thumps

grounded / breathes
 soil & sweet
 rot / half-open
 eyes track a black-
 cherry shadow over
 strands of sun / scratches
 her skull on a rough-
 bark stump / hears
 dry beech leaves, tethered
 & tossed / leaps
 up / hoof fall / grazes
 on stiff grass / crisp
 stems, snap of grain

Ripens

eyes shut / she rolls
 in red mud / fluffs
 her tail / sharpens
 nose / ears / waits
 for light

to lower / trots
 in the border-
 lands / thicket,
 field / half-grown
 kit / forage
 or frolic / track
 or romp / turns
 a somersault
 / pounces



Shifts

Turns her head to the left, turns
 it to the right, pivots to see
 behind. Deep hum among
 clover & goldenrod, scattered
 thistle — drone murmur
 whir. Beast-blooms buzz
 & hover, field swells, lifts —

barely-flicking / Numa
 nectar-sucks / unfazed
 by finches digging
 for seeds / clamorous
 honeyers / still
 in the whirling

Floats

fierce thistle / thorny / soft
purple spikes whiten / cast
off (cloudstuff (

breeze

becomes wind & scads
of seeds swirl (take her
along) fly / float / fall

begin

Unfolds

burrows
under / stretches
sunward

years go
by / centuries

still / never
still / awake
from pith to
outer bark / calls
draws in / dark
anchor / needles
of light / cone



Scatters

a small body
within the open
world / unlatched

spins / each
whorl an episode
proterozoin / each

passage caught
between songs /
brushing

eolian words / a
chorus reciting
the history of air

hits earth
glances
off / sheds

Rises

sprawled on pine
needles / descends
into grace / awakes
round & bristly /
quills (hollow)

eschewed / she clambers
skyward / lodges in a
nook of pitch-trunk &
branch / celestial wind
rattles the roost / blows
notes across her spines