Numinous Stones
Conversation Pieces

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Poems by Deborah L. Davitt

89. **Numinous Stones**  
Poems by Holly Lyn Walrath
About the Aqueduct Press
Conversation Pieces Series

The feminist engaged with sf is passionately interested in challenging the way things are, passionately determined to understand how everything works. It is my constant sense of our feminist-sf present as a grand conversation that enables me to trace its existence into the past and from there see its trajectory extending into our future. A genealogy for feminist sf would not constitute a chart depicting direct lineages but would offer us an ever-shifting, fluid mosaic, the individual tiles of which we will probably only ever partially access. What could be more in the spirit of feminist sf than to conceptualize a genealogy that explicitly manifests our own communities across not only space but also time?

Aqueduct’s small paperback series, Conversation Pieces, aims to both document and facilitate the “grand conversation.” The Conversation Pieces series presents a wide variety of texts, including short fiction (which may not always be sf and may not necessarily even be feminist), essays, speeches, manifestoes, poetry, interviews, correspondence, and group discussions. Many of the texts are reprinted material, but some are new. The grand conversation reaches at least as far back as Mary Shelley and extends, in our speculations and visions, into the continually created future. In Jonathan Goldberg’s words, “To look forward to the history that will be, one must look at and retell the history that has been told.” And that is what Conversation Pieces is all about.

L. Timmel Duchamp

Conversation Pieces
Volume 89

Numinous Stones

by
Holly Lyn Walrath
For my father,
and for Marco.
“O falling numinous world at dusk
O stunned and afflicted emptiness”

The author and her father
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We’re Refugees Who Found Love
Searching for Atlantis

The ocean is a vessel cast in the heat of the stars
We walked there in the twilight and sang skysongs
Our bodies were translucent and full of darkness
How we carried our homeland in our bones

We walked there in the twilight and sang skysongs
The molten gold we sucked from the statues burned
How we carried our homeland in our bones
What if the floating city is just a dream?

The molten gold we sucked from the statues burned
We tied our boats to the edge of the moon
What if the floating city is just a dream?
I liked how you held me close and smiled

We tied our boats to the edge of the moon
Our bodies were translucent and full of darkness
I liked how you held me close and smiled
The ocean is a vessel cast in the heat of the stars
On This Planet We Are All
Hurtling Through Space

If you stand still you can feel the massive pull
Of an invisible force dragging you onward
We cannot slow down or we will die
Ruin is in the past and only the future knows

Of an invisible force dragging you onward
How to die is a mystery to everyone now
Ruin is in the past and only the future knows
The way to quiet and gleaming oblivion

How to die is a mystery to everyone now
If you could download a soul, would it be mine?
The way to quiet and gleaming oblivion
Would you peel open my skin like a salve?

If you could download a soul, would it be mine?
We cannot slow down or we will die
Would you peel open my skin like a salve?
If you stand still you can feel the massive pull
Dark Shapes Move in the Morning
Before Dawn

They are like us but they are not human
How do we know this? How can we tell?
It is by their beating hearts worn on the outside
We would never reveal so much in one go

How do we know this? How can we tell?
An agreement we signed with our creamy blood
We would never reveal so much in one go
The magic of stones covered in a thin layer of skin

An agreement we signed with our creamy blood
They are gentle when they speak to us
The magic of stones covered in a thin layer of skin
We want to touch these waxy hearts to know

They are gentle when they speak to us
It is by their beating hearts worn on the outside
We want to touch these waxy hearts to know
They are like us but they are not human
A Graveyard for Fairytales

A child hangs upside down from the barrel of a cannon
In here, the air is bright and stale or else poisonous
A princess crawls among the flowers and grenades
Everything here is twisting or untwisting into itself

In here, the air is bright and stale or else poisonous
A wolf is singing songs made of barbed jewels
Everything here is twisting or untwisting into itself
In the deep of the well, death unbraids his hair

A wolf is singing songs made of barbed jewels
The dark forest is disillusioned and laid bare
In the deep of the well, death unbraids his hair
But this is the ruthless dream of a frightened child

The dark forest is disillusioned and laid bare
A princess crawls among the flowers and grenades
But this is the ruthless dream of a frightened child
Who hangs upside down from the barrel of a cannon
The Mountain Is so Close
to Disappearing
from Our Horizon

When you cut it open, you see the history of the world
Bits of rock and mud and fossil and white bone
You have to break a geode to see its insides
Someone has to decide the weight of land

Bits of rock and mud and fossil and white bone
An old woman swallows hot decay and cries
Someone has to decide the weight of land
Limping, you know there is courage in brokenness

An old woman swallows hot decay and cries
You walk under a grove of silver trees and scream
Limping, you know there is courage in brokenness
Something calls you to the cliffsides again and again

You walk under a grove of silver trees and scream
You have to break a geode to see its insides
Something calls you to the cliffsides again and again
When you cut it open, you see the history of the world
Thunder Walks the Earth

If you die at least I’ll see you again
You have discovered a planet inside yourself
It is a place where you can walk alone
Without the demands of higher beings

You have discovered a planet inside yourself
And there are tiny people living there
Without the demands of higher beings
You wish you were smaller, more human

And there are tiny people living there
I am one of them, born in your belly
You wish you were smaller, more human
Would knowing pain teach you to love?

I am one of them, born in your belly
I still remember the day you walked among us
Would knowing pain teach you to love?
If you die, at least I’ll see you again
My Heart Beats Slower Now

I dream a dream that goes on and on
Where she runs her lizard hands
Between my thighs
Is this the cost of freedom?

Where she runs her lizard hands
Flowers like dusty ghosts bloom
Is this the cost of freedom?
My intentions are to ruin everything

Flowers like dusty ghosts bloom
A hundred stars wink out at once
My intentions are to ruin everything
With the force of all this longing

A hundred stars wink out at once
Between my thighs
With the force of all this longing
I dream a dream that goes on and on
Glowing Fish Swim
Under My Skin

Ask yourself
What is the cost of emptiness?
If we’re willing to kill for autonomy
Can you blame us?

What is the cost of emptiness?
How many children are we willing to let die?
Can you blame us
For all the ships we sank?

How many children are we willing to let die?
How long does it take to melt a gun?
For all the ships we sank
We refuse to ask forgiveness from men like you

How long does it take to melt a gun
If you’re willing to kill for autonomy?
We refuse to ask forgiveness from men like you
Ask yourself—
The Rain Formed a Man and Reader,
I Drank Him

Everything is soluble and numinous, nothing lasts
He was a dreamscape made of pitter and patter
His hands were so pretty they crushed me
Inside of his grasp, I felt forlorn and brash

He was a dreamscape made of pitter and patter
Stepping out of the downpour with maddening ease
Inside of his grasp, I felt forlorn and brash
I am not used to magical men, obtainable love

Stepping out of the downpour with maddening ease
Like something I’d wish for if I knew how to wish
I am not used to magical men, obtainable love
Our love fell away simply like a moaning wave

Like something I’d wish for if I knew how to wish
His hands were so pretty they crushed me
Our love fell away simply like a moaning wave
Everything is soluble and numinous, nothing lasts
Bury Your Darlings
in the Swamp

She tells me to follow the lights
Oh—how sickly sweet is the taste of blood!
She clamps iron on my fairy skin
Our love is like a broken exchange

Oh—how sickly sweet is the taste of blood?
I greet her on my knees
Our love is like a broken exchange
Every promise is a glittering spectacle

I greet her on my knees
In the bayou where the bodies are kept
Every promise is a glittering spectacle
I was never taught I’m not rubbish

In the bayou where the bodies are kept
She clamps iron on my fairy skin
I was never taught I’m not rubbish
She tells me to follow the lights