

5 POEMS BY SARAH BERTI

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—an excerpt from *Foxfire and Moss*, forthcoming poetry chapbook

Song of the Deermage
Until the Omens Have Gone Dark
The Original Speech
At Midnight the Coywolves
Translating Gods

SONG OF THE DEERMAGE

wolf i made you a song of antlers
when the moonwood comes for you wolf
i sang you a deer

wolf i dreamed you the whitetail
when the snowmoon burns for you wolf
i witched you a hart

wolf i inside you outside hunger-time
when the mouth secretes for you wolf
i bound you a fawn

wolf i spun cloven and red-stamped the snowfall
i am the doe now come for you wolf
be afraid i am here wolf

i killed you a deer

UNTIL THE OMENS HAVE GONE DARK

until you hear the last leaf
has fallen from my tree

and the spore and mycorrhiza
have returned the spine to humus

and the numinous flamesap of
vein and memory
has grown dark—

for give and make and take
for granted that

the sunfire tipping off
the mountain tor

and the thunderheads
mushrooming in silver

and the soul lion stealing
the foothills of poems

and the detonation
of wildflowers
along the song coast

are my binding omens
to you

THE ORIGINAL SPEECH

there are no languages
left to sell

and the trees pine
to touch you without word

and the living Leaves
bearing the unknown Images
of your first magic

are the
original pages

scripted by a holy
Wind that Knows

nothing

AT MIDNIGHT THE COYWOLVES

at midnight
the coywolves take back their tongues
from human libraries

animal again
we know by

fur-photon, blood, and the spiral
howl

that we must
hunt something
for which we have no

name

lay down your alphabet

at the mindprints of sacred paws
surrender the salivating jaws
of your word traps

and flee

at the speed

of true
speech

TRANSLATING GODS

love is a Kōan
of ice
and fire

PRIMORDIAL PONY

i was born seven inceptions earlier
than the crystalline edge of æon

in the woolly blue-black haunches
 of a sly primordial pony
 stuck in a swamp

when i arrived
we shook the sulphur summer
out of our mosquito mane
hauled a foreleg free of mind-märl
 struck
that mud-heavy hoof on
the hot conception of rock
to quick-spark
the flying generation of our
 ancient future selves—

so we could shudder from primeval ooze
and squirm-squelch and shapeshift
from the sucking swamplands
across a new Firmament

to the moss-bound granite ground
we could grip and beget

and gallop