

Patti Scheibel

Imagine how snails make love;
do they crawl out of their shells?
They must. Do their eyestalks
glisten and wave in passionate
abandon? Do they leave
silvery mucus trails
all over each other
so their entire bodies shine?
They must do it slow...
intermingling their soft
brown bodies in a snail ballet.
Do they make a sound?
Can a snail sigh or moan?
How do they find each other
when they move so slow?
When they see each other
from a distance of maybe a foot,
do they hurriedly ooze through
the damp morning grass
wishing they were faster?
Or do they give a languorous
seductive little glance and
weave obscene endearing patterns
with their eyestalks from across
the distant inches of green?

Ghost Dance

The big bellied
stick legged
fierce faced woman
in the mirror
would run away
from me
the first chance
she gets,
leaving me
to spill out
across the universe
like hot water
from a flimsy
paper cup.
She's taken up
falling as a hobby
and twitching out
frowns in code,
always trying
to tug attention
to herself.
It's turned
into war.
Her pale hands
flutter out
of my control.
I weave feathers
in her hair and
paint her face,

forcing her
 into the drumfire
 patterns of this dance
 that I choose to do.
 I cling to her
 like smoke
 while she blows
 and bucks.

The Return

Home again from another failure and
 everything's the same,
 Mom and Dad,
 hoses in hand forever
 in the yard watering thirsty dirt
 while accusing one another of
 the usual atrocities
 (Father brutalizes the roses and
 Mother floods the plum tree).

This oasis of sharp
 brown grass and frowsy weeds
 will always belong to me though.
 The old bug jars, holes punched
 in their lids, are still lined up
 waiting in the shed
 like an army.

A person can never give up being
 an empress of insects;
 Lady of the Locusts, sleepy-eyed frogs
 and earthworms softer and pinker than
 any human lover's lips.
 I grope my blind toes
 into the loving mud.

My parents begin to screech,
neither has noticed me yet
(they're both getting old and I'm
still below eye level.)

I listen to the welcoming hum
in the air far under their voices.
All the winged things sing to me
and bless me unseen.