

# ALL ABOUT LAOCOÖN

WAYNE KOESTENBAUM

let me tell you about Laocoön

Laocoön was always stretching

he tried to push his hand through the picture plane

he had a message to give me

the serpents were invisible

in myth they coil around him

but in reality the serpents are perfume clouds

I asked him to come toward me

did he lick sugar crumbs from the nonpareil

Laocoön in sculptural form has an obligation to be nude

poems have clothing but sculpture is naked

the three serpents befriend Laocoön

the poet's duty is enumeration

one by one we depict the serpents

the painter's duty is simultaneity

the different parties agree

the king's son is naked  
his nakedness is not scandalous  
Gotthold Ephraim Lessing said  
"necessity invented clothes"  
"what has art to do with necessity"  
I asked for jam  
did they charge me for jam  
blue as the wall behind the sky  
a heap of boundary stones protected the crypt from tourists  
Laocoön sells tickets at the crypt door  
inside the crypt is William Blake  
sitting on his pony  
gitty up says William Blake to his jammy pony  
the jammy pony of a morning bun eater  
and then he drifts down the river in his barge  
red pony of the barge dweller  
or do I mean red peony of the barge  
when I rotate my head I hear a squeaky sound in my spine

the peony of the crypt hugger  
you hug the crypt because you fell in love with its lid  
when you were exiled in the nonpareil factory  
stirring the potion devised by the magician  
who commandeers the serpents  
coiling around your outstretched hands

## MEDEA FOR JOHNNY

WAYNE KOESTENBAUM

you heard me talk about the gutter ten years ago

low car parked at punishment curb

stickshift and intentionality

on the lawn I will do anything for your father

I love to drive and I will do anything for your father

Medea became a color consultant

the pharmaceuticals gone wrong

when I thought that a necklace could redeem me

like a terrycloth bathrobe for the predator

the dead man named Candy

a movement disorder but still I climb

rapprochement between Jason and Medea

they lived in Bel-Air

Jason answered the phone

twenty-five dollars an hour

but then he rescinded the offer

show biz is gut spillage

anything to make your father's life easier I will do

I love to drive and I will do anything for your father

## THE NEW NUDITY

WAYNE KOESTENBAUM

he sits on what used to be my talent  
up close his overly shaped pubic hair  
a vista larger and more uncontaminated than I'd expected  
trying to get fixings in the mess hall  
brisket unwelcome  
edge-voice *répéter*  
to re-Peter him  
make him a doubled Peter  
more developed, muscled, though shaved  
the mother understood her doubled son's predicament  
he was no longer permitted clothing  
his new nudity abolished a former precocity  
as a kitchen spawns a kitchenette, a luncheon a luncheonette  
his ass squooshes my former talent  
in the middle of the mess hall you can glance at the linden tree  
its blooming already mentioned  
when the wound's last droplets fell on the mensch

## O HALT, HALT, HALT

WAYNE KOESTENBAUM

and my eyes again were unseeing stones  
in the middle of the night  
crone banging on the hill  
bluntness of his zitty glance  
fatherland sternum in the satyr garden  
the zaftig wiener-grabber  
can Ganymede be your father  
can you wolf down the afterbirth  
bladder of the eyes  
change the subject to milk-mouth  
o halt, halt, halt  
said Jesus to the swimming coach  
and why are you wearing a veil  
heart coated in an expensive gunmetal finish  
garden traversed by forgotten footsteps  
drag the brush around the edge and make the composition a holiday

## LUCULLAN FEASTS OF OUR BETTERS

WAYNE KOESTENBAUM

The single rose offered three corridors  
to a nose curious about morals  
I subdivide into huts  
and Saturn.

\*

A mannequin ignored my florid message—  
I predicted “happy reciprocity” for us  
if he’d agree to strip.

\*

The smell corridor again beckons:  
the white or yellow rose  
has a pulse that divides into corridors.

\*

Dancing upstairs in a corridor  
a rose’s aroma coined,  
I drew a glacial radius  
between rose petal and sister tango.

\*

Where is the rose,  
where is the minotaur  
wearing a tunic  
with a Peter Pan collar,

a fashion relic  
someone rude  
rebuked, as if there arose,  
from nothingness,

a scent as  
subdermal and epiphanic  
as an unpictured  
lion’s roar?