

Patrick Chapman

Wanda Ventham's Eyes

Your face is gold, your eyes like stars exposed.
An ancient power gathers in your breast.
You're Thea Ransome, human scientist,
absorbed into a worm-gestalt that thrives
on suffering. A godlike thing composed
by fusing core and twelve disciple slaves,
the Fendahl and its prey. Together you'll
destroy the world. If Christ's impossible

body is kosher, so are Fendahleen.
If a saviour can be forged of a god,
a human and a ghost, why not thirteen
elements born of a pentagram skull?
Those alien eyes, painted on your lids,
see deep into this nine-year-old, and smile.

Alien

How tender is the one who made the wasp
that pounces on the caterpillar, drills
into its body. Ovipositor
bites, the female *Glyptapanteles* lays
eighty eggs inside the victim. After
hatching, the larvae feed on the fluids
in the overtaken caterpillar
but do not attack its vital organs;
they must keep the incubator living
as through instars and exoskeletons
they mature. The bloated caterpillar,
when it is time to leave, they paralyse
with a chemical. Each larva gnaws its
own way out, stopping up the exit wound
with one final moulting, caterpillar
conscious of every rupture. In the space
of an hour, most of the larvae break free.
They gather in a mass to spin cocoons.
The puppet creature, its mind overcome
by sacrificial larvae left behind,
uses its own dying silk to produce
a protective cover for the pupae.
Their guardian now, the caterpillar
lashes out with its head at any threat
to its abusers. Rearing on hind legs
it swipes blindly at predators, not least
the hyperparasitoids who'd inject
their own eggs into *Glyptapanteles*.
The newborn wasps abandon the cocoons.
In time the caterpillar starves to death.
Remind me of how kind he is, the one
who made all that is made and even this –
the model of a normal family.

Pie Jesu

Art heist.

Thirty-three years on,
to celebrate *Piss Christ*,
place into a whisky glass
the crucifix you tore
off a plastic rosary.

Fill the glass with urine,
amber from the night before,
held within for texture.
Do not photograph it yet.

Use the crucifix to stir,
then drink the urine,
wash the glass out,
wipe the cross,
replace it, ask Serrano
to forgive you. He
believes as you do not.

Wait an hour or so,
distilling the suspension.

Go again to piss into the glass
and hope for two lines to appear,
a positive result, on the ivory
of Christ's refracted face.

But no –
your menstruation
trickles out. Christ
drowns in it.
Blood sacrifice.
Art murder.

Kepler Duels Anew

Often, the question having been settled,
an astronomer embraced
his guilt. [perseus arm]

Deciding
that he might as well be hanged
for a sheep as for a lamb [jumping
over a gate at midnight] he would
train himself to fall narcoleptic
in the prison yard and damn the truth,
damn the consequences.

[
]

This
was usually the point at which
the governor stepped in to prevent
a tragic sequel to the original reverie,
and put the defective astronomer
down for good. [norma arm]

Unlike
a failed suicide brought to the gallows,
or an abused child caned for her tears,

a stellar philosopher dies
in someone else's sleep.