

James Joaquin Brewer

## It Depends On So Much

“anachronistic fiction”

“When anger spreads through the breath, guard thy tongue from barking foolishly.”

– Sappho, fragment quoted by Plutarch (“On Restraining Anger”)

Eyeing with simmering envy the short line that included only W.C. Williams and E.W.L. Pound, Gertrude Stein—in a possibly *literally* pissy mood—growled a loud complaint in lines shorter than the one she feared would prevent her “from ever *moving up!*” She lowered the leather-strapped binoculars she had been staring through, cleared her throat, and in howling tones even louder than those previously employed addressed her follow-up phrasings directly toward one of the two “Gents” way up ahead—way up there in front of the “other” door: “Hey, Ezra! Is this an *apparition* of a *comfort* station in this version of a modern metro? Or what?”

Pound pondered. Williams wondered. Stein remembered Sappho’s short-lined “This Way, That Way”:

I do not know

what to do

I am of two minds

From farther back in the long line, way behind Stein, closer to Phillis Wheatley and Amy Lowell (but really not all that far from Audre Lourde and Elizabeth Bishop, or even from Gwendolyn Brooks and Anne

Bradstreet), Emily Dickinson responded in lines also shorter than the one she was sharing with so many for whom she felt both sympathy and empathy:

I so fervently wish  
that so much did not depend  
on a red-lettered Water Closet—  
with a paucity of doors  
before the white bowls

Several voices sang out, a harmonizing chorus from the throats of poets whose names and works may or may not have appeared in the latest and/or largest *Norton Anthology of* \_\_\_\_\_. Their song's refrain contained but two short lines:

Solidarity, Sister!  
Nothing *foolish*-tongued about *that*!

Ezra Pound turned, cupped a hand behind one ear, and cast a long gaze toward the end of the other line, searching for the source of that first unsatisfied utterance that sounded so much like the voice of Gertrude Stein. William Carlos Williams turned also, placed a hand horizontally over his brow to diminish the intense glare of noon-hour sunlight, and tried to locate Ms. Dickinson. Each of this pair of male poets was (for the immediate moment at least) unsure of an appropriate response to what they were hearing, but both believed some words were owed.