

She was answering to a number
of borrowed and oddly constituted names,
improperly sequenced, vowel-
heavy, the few stops clustered *foreignly*, hissing
and humming—stickily twisting on the tip
of the tongue. Her being was “with song
encumbered”. You were limping in
incidentally mocking sympathy
along, “foot-dragging”: shufflestepping, missing
the occasional trick or beat—were toetap-
tapping softly—silently sync-
opating. You had the momentum. She had the “flesh-
frocked” media now hanging on her
every obscure syllable.

The innocence you were now pretending
to have lost had a bitterly bright green taste
to balance the sweet of memory.

It was Blakean. It was blind harpist
stuff. It was the moist sediment of binding
energy, a softly focused stark-
ness. Your fingers on the points of her hip-
bones, all the missing tones and syllables—like
'congeries of angels'—on the sinewy
nib of your tongue. You were finding incor-
rigibly your niche: feinting—orally his-
toricizing. You were young once
again—back home: setting the rumors
to music. Your winnow had been taken for an oar.

Strangers were among the first to report—
or dumbly to signal—the ‘Presence’: transient
types, peddlers of “anecdotal remedies,

root simples and specifics, tonics
and balms.” It was the purest hearsay
to begin. There was talk of a broadcast snap-

shot: The unicorn in the fair lady’s
lap, nuzzling, studiously gentled, cross-
bred, nodding an unretouched assent.

O walk wide circles around this hornéd
one, this massed apparition, this virtual “work-
horse of deliverance.” The project,

as now it was known, was to force
no portals open on eternity.

One heard the occasional reference to a *horn-like appendage*— which, “yard-harvested” and pestled to a whitish, flour-fine powder,
had the virtue of “elevating the conversation” or of stoutly jacking the mast up as a medicinal hoist
or leaven. There were other not so obviously practical uses. All eyes were refocusing slowly now—unable to survey
the field, which was purest spectacle:
The foreground platform, anciently deforested,
the several topiary
familiar, half screening a tusked, rope-muscled beast, a salt statue of a young girl bathing.

The debt was large; the funding
sources far from obvious. The schedules
were rarely met. The figures bled
into the background. Now you had to stretch
the scant sums on-hand out to cover
the family ration of bread
and beer and the winter circuses.
It was never a *dearth* or a “poverty
of means” or ideas. The featured beasts’ year-
round upkeep fell within reason. Mixed
signals were routine. The animals left
the ring uneasily, not meaning
to mock our discipline, our eagerness
to find an irony in their obedience.

Their paradise was a sexless,
sheltered place, close, lushly colored, ivy-
rife, a fine and private precinct, cunningly walled-
in. It was “a not so subtle parody
of heaven”. It was a zoo [glossed
as a *garden*]. A plush niche for the neutered
beasts needing patiently to be known.

Others shrewdly hid their proper
names, unready to be summoned now, unready
to be drawn out — out of ambush in the wild
state, out of the wild variety

of Nature. Nakedly as the green world
lacked fixed signage, your body posed — a reckless-
ly aesthetic act: unspoken, shown.