

**Three Words for a Muse**  
*February 2005*

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You come for conversation, sit  
At the root of my tongue.

I meet your eyes, those startling  
Birds. Your face is open,  
Unfathomable, a word  
Stretched sideways, it defies  
Meaning and then relents.

You tolerate me, appreciate  
Because I flatter you.  
I am not yet finished.

I stand, offer you  
My cheek. You reach out for  
My hand in some other era.

This language tastes  
Like cinnamon and damp earth.  
If I could speak truly of you,  
You would, I feel certain, become  
Unveiled, a terror.

Your eyes juxtaposing,

The violent threshing  
Of your mouth – a womb,  
Its vessels made of clay.  
Its winnowing unnerves me.

The gods have scattered within you  
A seed of power that  
I recognize. I sing of you and  
You are coy, respectful.

After some brief words, you  
Will dart away unscathed.  
But tonight, I will weep  
While your totem Spirit bears  
You, sleeping, away.

I pour a word from my cup  
With both hands. You notice,  
Look downward, blushing. Just  
Beneath the surface of you,  
An errant thing unspoken  
Glides along the ridge.

Your honeyed tongue is a veil  
Of pearls. The sky is wandering  
Closed, while the grass  
Knits her fingers across my mouth.

Perhaps you will

Stay a bit longer, urge

Me on, or maybe

I will die here, having already

Said too much.