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No Moon

Chard DiNiord

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No Moon

The stars are slightly off, like a child's rendering,
Drawing my eyes to etch their lines of canonized beasts;
To hell with proper names and the right numerical order.
I will connect them where I will, make them my own,
Remembering still the history of myths. This preparation
For sleep makes me envious of earlier men who roamed
Arroyos in search of mastadons. I picture the bulls
Of Lascaux, remembering well enough from glossy reproductions
Their beautiful attenuated lines that could and couldn't
Have been defined as recently as yesterday. Hidden
For thousands of years beneath Dordogne before a group of boys
In search of their dog discovered them by accident. Drawn
As if from constellations, or to form them, image and reality in
one.

These troglodytes trained their muscular hands to hold
Their brushes with feminine ease, or maybe it was the women
Who stroked these scenes at home, inventing the idea
Of a magical screen on which their narratives betrayed
The chain at least of strong and godly animals.

Lying here now five hundred millenia later, I admit
To myself while you sleep that I cannot put all the fires out
Nor would want to; my father left them burning in the corners
Of my eyes as if for a reason, as if for the stars.
They are eternal discriminating fires.
They are what gives my blood its color.
They are not what makes me American but human,
And you are the same. I stare at the stars before closing
My eyes; now they are sheep who have fallen in a well,
Butchered by counting. The children are asleep nearby,
Breathing like metronomes. Our fidelity is unnatural.
Outside the camp, two gems of animal eyes peer in
At the dying coals, mesmerized and tame. They are harmless
Creatures now, hungry for the hanging food and buried garbage,
Daring enough to trample over us in the middle of the night

With unwitting steps on our thighs and groins.
I look forward to their coming and fall asleep.