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Woman Who Begins Like a Rock

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PAT BRIDGES

Woman Who Begins Like A Rock

She beats the drum:

Woman who Begins like a Rock, I
 remember many strong dreams
 of journeys over water
 of movement without cause
 A time before this chaos of nerves
 when dreams gave order, gave strength.
 Now I have learned to isolate myself,
 wicked as I am, and live
 far away from this memory:
 the even beats of your breath.

The Chorus sings on and on:

A frenzied flow over mountains and
 through fields, from inland lake to
 ocean shore, at night, we
 singing women, winter mooning in our hair,
 clutch torches in bird-like hands.
 With gifts of snakes or small forest creatures
 — which often we tear to bits —
 We come to see
 Come to see the world the way it is.

Whatever it is the mind refuses
 hides out in the body
 grieving in a deep muscle or
 angering the bones to inflammation.
 Whatever it is that can't be owned
 wants out!

Demands to be seen,
 will take up residence in every room of
 the body's house until
 that cunning which gives the outcast
 the trick of burrowing,
 like time's wrinkles into flesh,
 is finally exhausted.

We are only half grown
 still not awake, barely able to move,
 and already something about the way we walk
 makes us nomands.
 By the time we learn to dance
 we will be known as whores and gypsies
 and still it will take all our cunning
 to keep to the road at all.

A moment ago I was asleep
 Now I can almost speak
 A moment ago the lightest of mysteries
 were obscene and awful secrets;
 Now I can almost speak.
 But this is a rage so slow
 only the spinal cord can name it
 And while my words are churned
 to a scorpion morass
 something suicidal whispers
 its goal of madness.

Woman who Begins like a Rock,
 before everything we are came you
 and everything you feared slept
 in us as in a tomb.
 Now everything not mourned for,
 always denied,
 is rising like the ideal breath of lovers
 just beyond the next hill.