

The Alchemist's Cup

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Originally published in
Blue Unicorn 31:3, June, 2008
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Look at the ghost of ash that lines its bottom,
how its rim is not sharp:
to drink is to volunteer to go on.
Let's:

Gold is not gold
(to an alchemist): it is
what can be made into it.
Not everything (not flesh, for example).

Imagine the alchemist in his cellar; he scares
the neighbors: (stays up all night like cats)
reads by candle. Reads. Things smell in there.
The alchemist sees gender everywhere
(the element love: the throb of unrequited rock), and yet

and yet, the internal weather of mood is alien to him:
Years from now: the brimstone smell of wax,
the rage of neighbors (his death).

But now, now (in his brave youth),
imagine the alchemist in his cellar; how outside
the green is everywhere (the silent
of nature). There is no alphabet (out there)

despite the carvings on the cup:
(the symbols that try to refer)
despite how the unicorn's lips glimmer with meaning.
Out there, out there: male and female are cosmetics
lava dispenses with.

Mercury (this is the myth)
fucks a god only once
his snakish penis curling about
(inside Jove).

The alchemist (it is gray dawn
at last) has been reading
by sputtering candle,
poring over monkish erotica,
unaware of history, of who actually wrote
these things, what small band of cowled folk
masturbated before Vespers
over what he takes to be cosmology.

It is not a matter
of matter, of the layering of electrons:
No, no, no (and here is the secret of wands):
each substance is a manuscript
(folded open by incantation).

This is how wizards think too: It's a matter
of who's behind it all, of which thought
tangles stuff together
so that with just the right words, gold unfolds
(wood falling away like illusion).

We're past this now
(we wise ones).
When I see homeless lava cake into moonscape,
I know it has nothing to do with you
or me (or what we do when we sleep together).

Symbols evaporated from our world
eons before we set fire to wood,
eons before we blinked into the angry red
(and thought we detected kinship).