

ASHLEY GARRETT



TAROT IMAGES

with poems by

Billie Chernicoff, Lila Dunlap,
Robert Kelly, and Tamas Panitz

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THE ASTONISHING TAROTS OF ASHLEY GARRETT

The best advice, instruction, on the use of Tarot cards I've ever heard was offered by the poet Stephen Jonas. Through the kindness of Gerrit Lansing, I had come to know Jonas, and one evening in the mid 1960s was present at one of his Tarot sessions; he was talking with the remarkable Carol Weston. He told her: *Look at the card and remember.*

Remember. Putting it all together – how this image, never seen before perhaps, would (by the hypothesis of magical incarnation that rules cartomancy) suddenly rouse in you awareness of processes and practices germane to the moment, your moment. You look and you remember. You remember what you never knew, see again what you have never seen.

When I walked into the light-fueled huge studio she shares with Brian Wood (whose fierce contemplative paintings I continue to write about), I saw on Ashley Garrett's side of the space a table laid out with what seemed half a hundred of the most potent Tarot images I have ever seen. Not one was a conventional Tarot image, not one in fact was a representational image at all. What they were was an astonishing array of small abstract paintings that worked, instanter, on the mind the way Tarots are supposed to work, summoning from the less available parts of our conscious abrupt visions of order and process. I dared not look closely at too many of them or the sunny afternoon with these new friends would have vanished into trance and silence. I picked up one or two, and each one spoke to me.

Immediately I wanted these cards, all of them that I could see, to be made into a book or a deck, a book that would collect these new and potent images and give them to a society much in need of news from the interior.

For these cards of hers, and I have no idea whether anything like that was her intention or in her mind at all, these images *are the new Tarots*, not smirched by too much commentary, unsoiled by the way the Tarots have been coopted in story and film, or trapped in occultist orthodoxies. These are the brand-new images of the oldest world. And we will use them both for delight, as with any pictures (we are children who love pictures) and for the profound researches into the self that the dear old Tarots have given us for centuries. You can see more images on Garrett's website: <https://www.ashleygarrett.com/>

—Robert Kelly



The Decision

*Am I man or angel?
One arm, one wing,
my heart already a rose,
genitals swollen,
thigh fleshy, eye open.
Not my mouth,
but mind
wakes, something
soft and fast
happens like doves.
Are they words?
Are they my words?
Now they're gone.
Either way,
I can see
I'll be lonely.
Either way,
I'm likely to fall.*

To decide is to cut,

a violence.
Better to wait
till there's no need.
Better to flap and flail
and not know.
Ask anyone,
ask me.
You enchant me.
Do nothing.

– *Billie Chernicoff*



The Pool

It's true I hid this pool
just as I hid myself
in it, lifting my dress
and wading in,
knowing
it would excite you.
I hid it in the woods
of your recurring dream
in its own vortex
under its own torrent,
water I sang over
falling for its orchids,
bracken and pine,
the not so innocent
perfume of our
happy narcissism,
an outdoorsy dream
with birds and flowers

mistaking each other
for laughter.
Now I see I was disclosing
by concealing this
pool, this card, myself,
and that feels right,
doesn't it?
That's one way,
a good way.
Blessed secrets.
Still, I imagine Artemis
rising naked for once
into the light,
letting anyone see.
That's a good way too.

—*Billie Chernicoff*

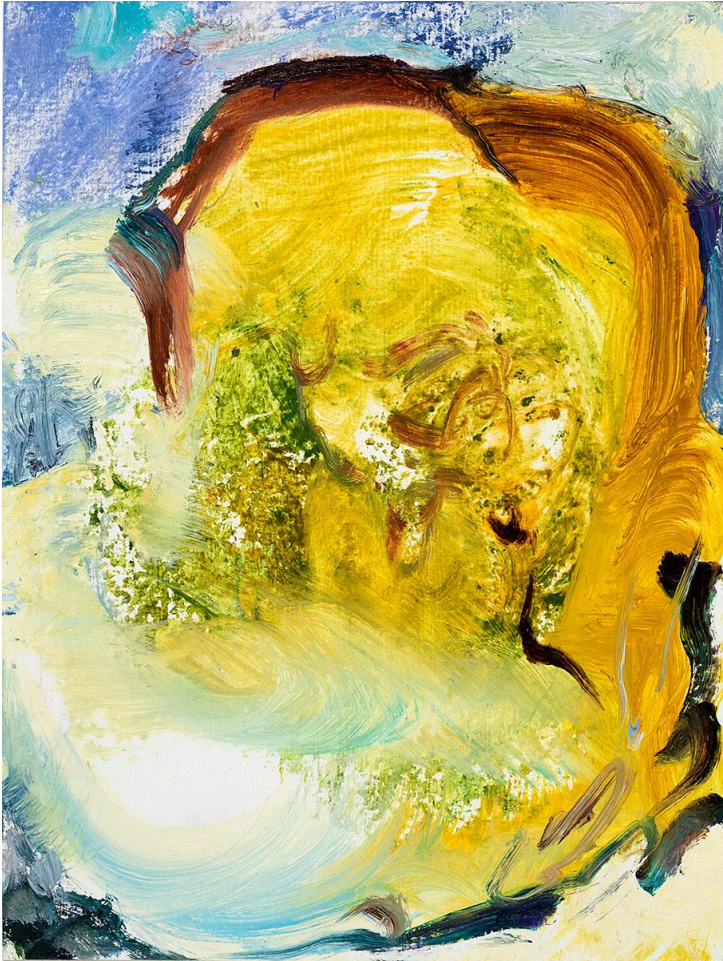


The Oxbow

A river lost in thought
like Lao Tzu,
the court astrologer
who gave up his post
and abandoned the past
as well as the future,
those twin addictions,
to go where he liked,
like water, a koan.
You can see him here,
a fool at home
on the edge of an abyss,

not dark or terrible,
quite another country,
of citrine light
and meadow flowers,
Queen Anne's Lace,
the white of paper,
each umbel with its single
tiny dark purple mole,
its just off-center,
virginal floret.
Did I say meadow
or island?
Or star that fell
through his mother's gaze
to conceive him.
They say she labored
under a plum tree,
and there are a few
visible here, rosy
smudges from above.
Lao Tzu was born
an old man
with a white beard
and here he sits
under a plum tree,
still on the way.
He has the black hat
of an errant rabbi,
or the center of
a wild flower
you knew as a girl
and still know,
but I digress,
I stray,
and so should you.

—*Billie Chernicoff*



The Mollusk

A metaphor for salt,
wisdom, wet
fleshy wit,
see the man in the boat?
The woodwose,
priest, green
ordinary man
who weeps leaves
and leaves.
See its mouth
and heart,
the anal rose,
a breathing

figure of speech,
the labial tent,
proscenium
of the mysterium.
Why did you come,
is that your question?
The sea is your lover,
no need for else.
Selfish shellfish,
no advice. Clitoral,
literal, liturgical,
I could have called this
Pleasure or Coming,
nothing like anything,
no advice.

—*Billie Chernicoff*



The Vineyard

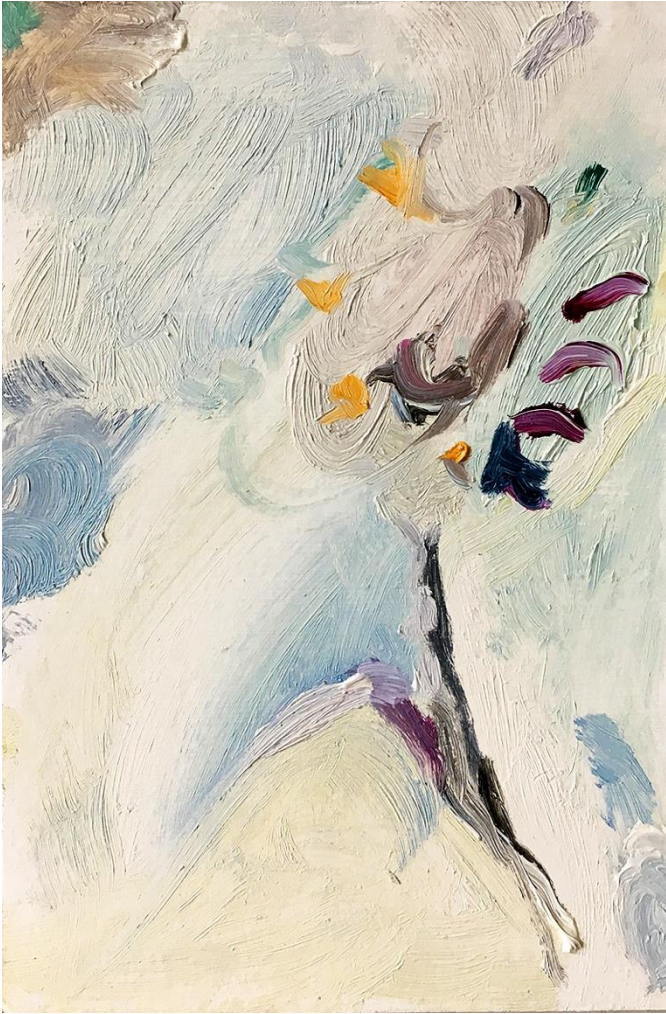
You will inherit a chateau
whose terroir is identical
almost to heaven,
a mirror image.
The only road is the sun,
drifting through the old vines
and green declivities
where you hesitate
as if you could choose.
The vigneron
pours you a glass of the near

black wine of your estate,
tasting of smoke and seedy fruit.
He wants you to do as you please.

How slow the bees are in this warmth.
When you crouch in the lavender
a motherless ecstasy bears you down
to an even more physical world.
How you love things, in sun or shadow.

That's all I see, Kore.
No one hurt or lost,
no scorpion on the sill.

—*Billie Chernicoff*



The Mountain Goat

Properly mountain nymph,
not goat at all,
above the tree line,
beyond salt.

Go to a high place, alone.
Cast off the mean and pretty
things people say.
Lie down like a child in the snow
and close your misread eyes.
There.

Let the sun gild your horns,
your dreams dream themselves.

Or might you need salt?
As a salt subject
you may feel lost,
even unloved.
In that case
Natrum Muriaticum
is your remedy,
a week at the beach.

—*Billie Chernicoff*



Sovereignty

He rubs the earth as a lamp,
summons himself, djinn
of his native clay.
The mist of his will,
woody, resinous,
hot, grassy,
acquires limbs,
torso, tongue.
Born whole from a clod
or a single bee,
from any one
of a thousand darknesses,

Africa,
neither symbol nor subject
of its congeries,
he is its own shape,
its language and king.

— *Billie Chernicoff*



The Sun

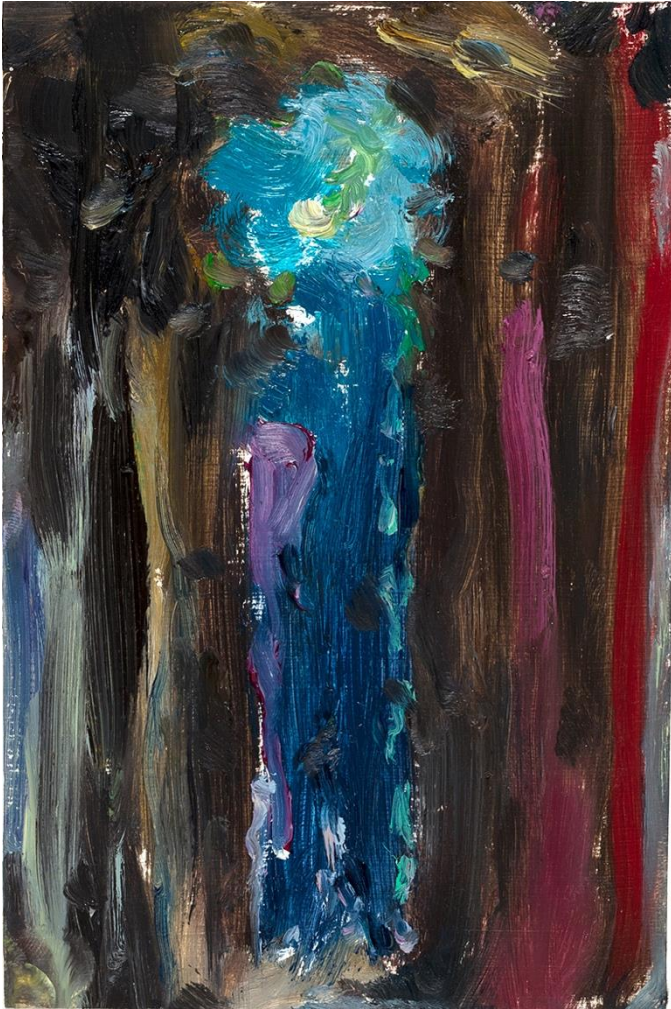
Love is not what you think.

Rhythmic chaotic origin of “the.”
The drama in heaven.

Face to face with the first things.
Above all, color.

Close your eyes,
you’ll see.

—*Billie Chernicoff*



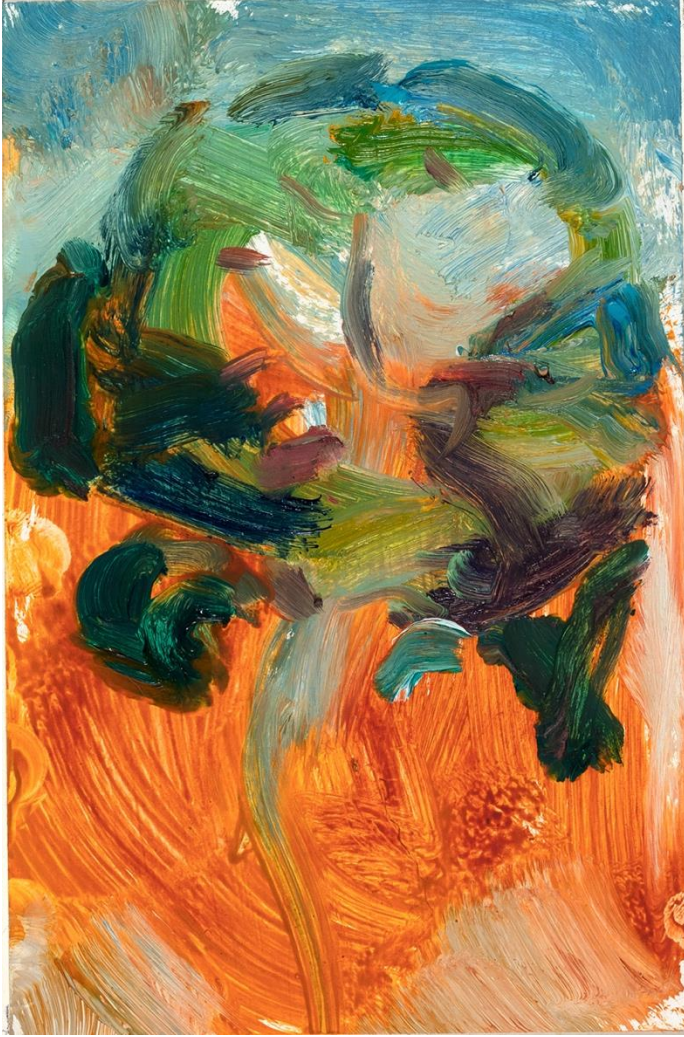
The Obstacle

It's my job
as well as my pleasure
to remove obstacles
from your throat,
your ear,
all your flight paths
and allées.

To that end I become
each obstacle –
the cloud in your eye,
stone in your shoe,
your fear of snakes,

fear of falling.
Neither mother
nor lover
you never had,
though I do
love you
in my way,
as you must
love me in yours.
I'm the obstacle.
When I step aside
trees part for you,
mirrors open like doors.
Also called the teacher
you can see I'm nothing
but a blue sky
with a rose in its mouth.

— *Billie Chernicoff*



Hungry girls need to eat
even if it means this cactus.
Yum, prickly floral, rouge and rogue
maroon sideburns on starkly
stern gentleman of the desert
red rust bust underneath
his low shoulder, carrying little
but his beans and clean air.

—*Lila Dunlap*



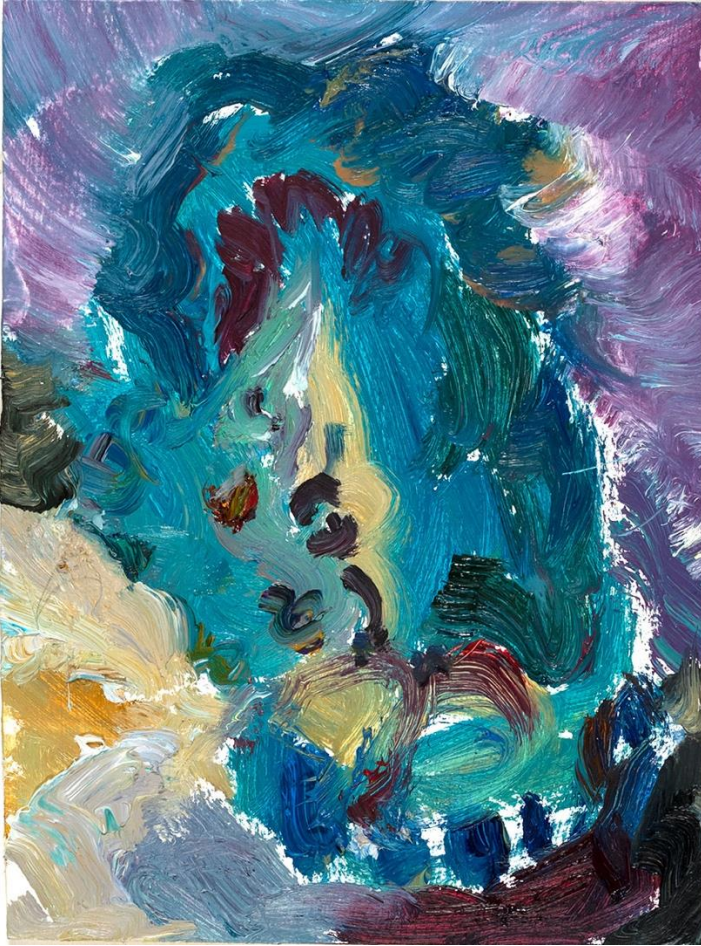
Big fist make little difference,
said the fish to the ruined
submarine. Kiss my kelp,
touch my mine, where the rusted spines
of this vintage bomb
talk to the tickling barnacles
when you dive down to find sharks
or treasure. The ghosts of dead sailors
dance drunk with anemones
reddish-coloured rainbows
just out of light of the shallows.

—*Lila Dunlap*



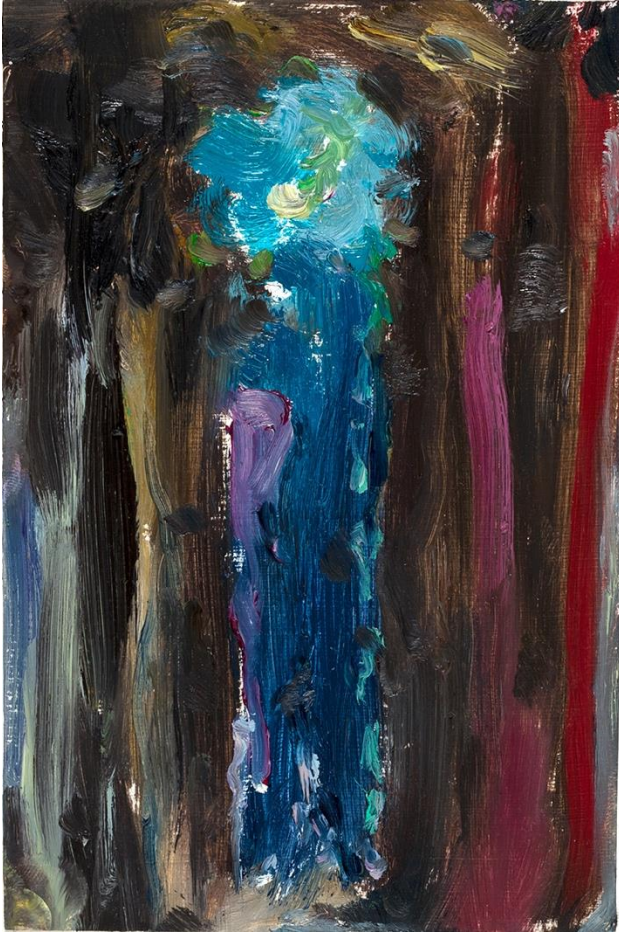
The road blows bran
misted memory of vineyards
at the close of October
I can't help but think of Van Gogh's
twisted *Wheatfield with Crows*,
or so I remember,
the last dance before death
(for both the artist and the land)
a girl in a brown dress
empties grain onto the earth
its own winter soup
thick and meaty
rich with oil and complete starches
as rainbow and ruinous
as vaginal fluid
dripping after a rainstorm.

— *Lila Dunlap*



Big blue blustery solid
genital rush.
This is a solid expulsion
via which we view the organ.
She shows us how deep
we need to go
to reach her manhood.
She keeps a little bit of sand
in the corner of her room.
And a leggy red bird
spreads its wings
right at the fulcrum
where she opens her legs.
Meanwhile Amazonian black ants
trickle out from inside her
willingly.

— *Lila Dunlap*



Our bubbling fades to reverence
and we gratefully stand at attention
ready to kill or give birth to our god,
see him wash up unspoken of
on the sand. Ask me
was the water blue or grey
that day, was the sand of coral or glass?
Face-down we worship you,
strenuous as our worship is,
make us a cult for you,
and we rub down our temple with blood,
our window frames with lead paint,
and look to the larger sea that awaits us,
across that thin and whistling bridge.

— *Lila Dunlap*



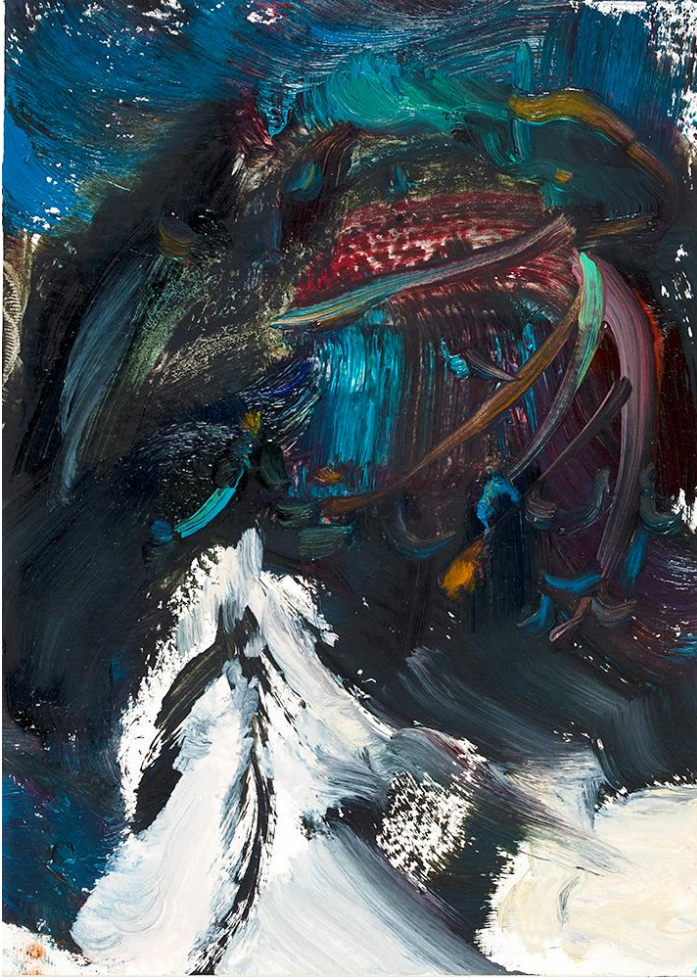
Begins with rose, ends with a leap,
End me, cries the Heavens,
see me splatter. He adds his hands
to the apple, and we find ourselves
soaring fast through the firmament.
Nothing happens but creation.
Watch the world work,
being everything inside its orgasm.

— *Lila Dunlap*



A blue swivel, an Inuit child
asleep in his blankets of fur.
Outside the night rages on,
as unannounced and wild as any city.
Flocks of lantern-bearing or lantern-headed ghosts
prance by, outside on the snow.
Nearby, an eel sleeps, pulsing, his belly
full of food, and beyond this mess
of broadness and particularity
the sky makes its way to a hazy morning.

— *Lila Dunlap*



A Christmas of who or what has never seen the light
(as all Christmases are).

The wolf on spider legs salutes the rising red
and howls as best he can. Some snot
escapes through his teeth,
and he can see that it is green.

Upward white Christmas trees dash and dance:
Spruce and Fir we are! Yule-logs
to be set on fire by our Lord.

And God like a flaming Ferris-wheel
having buried one son bears another
and the demon turns his dark cloak
to cover his dirty blue face.

—*Lila Dunlap*

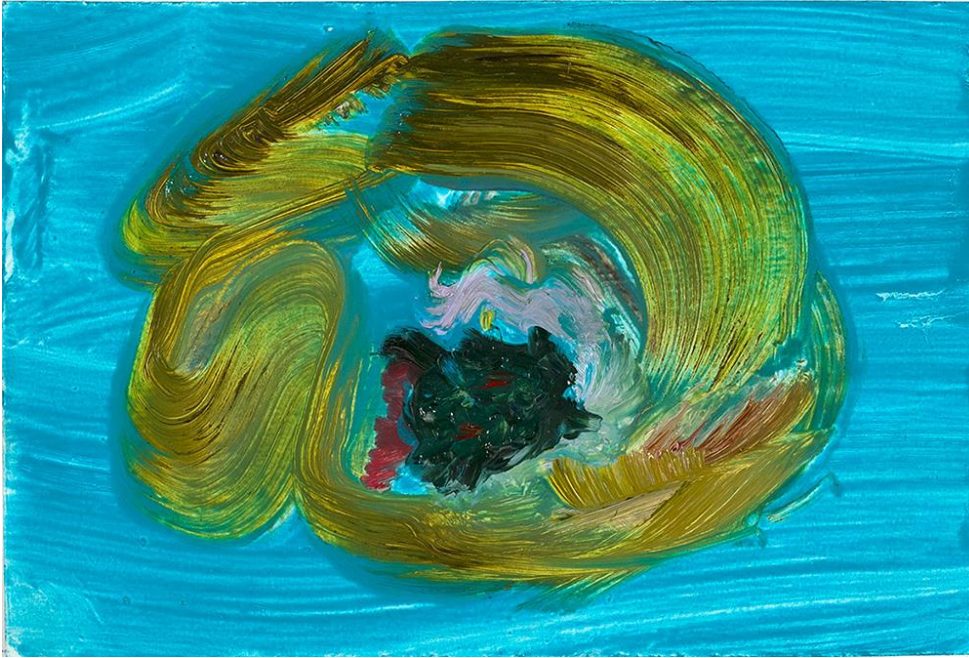


The holiday cake is round.
The celebratory bread.
Babka, king cake, galette du rois, a holy circle,
(all but the Yule log, not Christian at all).
And here you can see the brandied cherries
studding the sun, shielding our eyes from our God
while the fuzzy blue sky bubbles
with the help of this warmth
ripples like silk in springtime ecstasy.

So round and round the ladies dance,

the girls of our village, feet in the dirty grass
immune to filth, elevating the cake, the coin,
the loop, the face which looks back at the heavens
and recognizes it as such.

—*Lila Dunlap*



Under the water the wretched fish of the deep
cannot aptly celebrate the birth of our Lord, but they do their best.
They swim fast in a circle and maintain between them
a sprig of Christmas vegetation
dotted with berries and tied with ribbons
to complete their undersea wreath.
I don't know what to think of this tradition.
It is said that when our Christ was born,
at that same moment the cat Christ, and dog Christ,
and giraffe Christ, and crab Christ were also born,
each according to his species.
That being said, my grandma also told me
that: "A fish isn't an animal,"
so it is hard to pass judgment on this one.

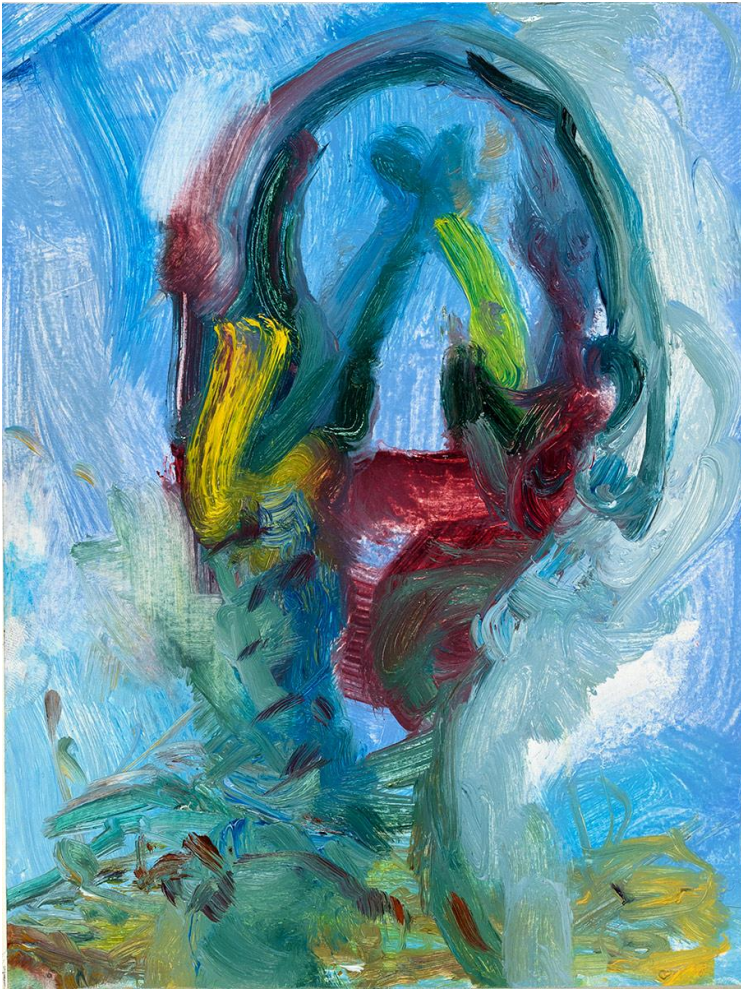
—*Lila Dunlap*



Little dance moths
do during the day
-light hours, a book of hours
is the very progression of the sun
as we see it from our gardens.
The text is the squashes
fattened on the vine.
Healthy cucurbits
mumbling psalms
in late afternoon.
A blue bird lands
on the sprout of a pumpkin
suddenly weightless
in this quiet wind
of paradise, a walled garden, aware
and looking at itself and all else
surrounded by night
beyond the wall

and the dusky rhythms
of the jittering blood
within the dancers
exchanging their skin
with one another and the cosmos
make this brightness possible.

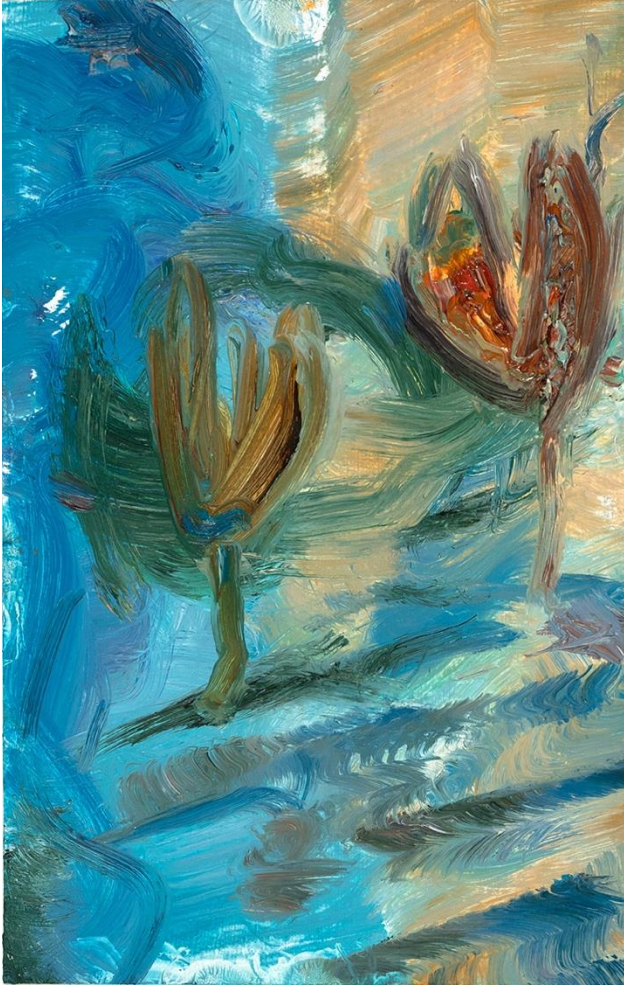
—*Lila Dunlap*



I held the world in my hand
and had no hands.
I gave it to you
and you weren't there.
This is the dream of the Giant,
the liberal answer
to unasked questions.
When you see this image
you know you're safe,
it holds you in its hands
and it has hands,
it builds a church

out of sticks and stones,
brings you into it,
marries you there.
When you see this image
you know you are complete.
Things have happened already.
Be quiet and dream what comes.
This is Alpha and Omega and
the naked man who carries them
into the world. Some call him
the Redeemer, but he buys nothing
back. All he does is give.
And what he gives I think is us.

– Robert Kelly



The hands of God hold ripeness
only when we reach up. There is a kind
of flower that knows this better than I do
but I can't find it growing anywhere.
Maybe the subway. Maybe under the river
Though I think it grows on my mother's grave.
Everything is far away but God. The young
Gypsy woman who drew this image
quickly on the palm of my hand called it
The Sound you can Actually Hold Onto.
And when you do, the flower comes to you.
It feels like the skin of her knee or yours
and the color keeps changing
the way you do too.

— Robert Kelly



The Dark Decider
lives in our minds.
When we think
this way and that
the Decider decides
and we live with it.
When you draw this card
put everything out of mind.
Maybe allow yourself to recall
a stream flowing past some trees.
Don't name them. Don't care
if there are fish in the water

or lovely beings bathing there
or earnest Baptists at their play.
Hear the water ripple. Nothing
has to be decided, does it?
You're who you are, where you are,
and the stream keeps going away.

— *Robert Kelly*



Sometimes the swan turns round
and swims towards the beginning.
This is The Beginning. Swans
don't swim. This is how the world
looked last night over the Catskills
as the world was beginning. Swans
walk through the water, bodies a-float,
legs paddling unseen, what the great
neglected Eddison called "the policy
of the duck." This is not the duck
and not the swan, this is only one bird,
the bird called Beginning, that flew
over the river last night, that flew
a few million years ago over Eden.
Which I think was Egypt, which Cain
my ancestor left and moved east
to the land of Nod, the very place
my mother sent me every night.
But that was before the beginning.

—Robert Kelly`



THE KISS

What else could come so close
and curve around you inside and out,
a tyrant tongue around your breath
and such soft closures on your lips.
And a kiss is never red, despite
childish images. Once you've been
Really kissed you know a kiss
is blue as Achilles hair, or black
as your insides at night, in bed,
bargaining with kisses or whatever

old poetry guessed that people did
when everybody in the dark is Cupid
and the only light is the quick
excitement engulfing all your lips.

—*Robert Kelly*



The beasts who carry
our flesh-colored star
on their greenish fur
— midnight paved with
olivine, an emerald lake,
treasure to find
and never return —

the beasts I ride are daemons
of books and friends who cross
our ample world the beasts
must not and not not
believe in. Read. Beasts we ride
across the green text,
tabula smaragdina.

Ride them to the star
their flesh holds buried,
purple tinged bow and arrow

in the hands of *The Hunter*,
earthly Tammuz; *The Star*,
this star, must steal from
her brother: turn outward.

– *Tamas Panitz*