

Baigneuse

Portrait d'une Inconnue

The woman steps from the bath  
perfumed moistness of her skin  
absorbed  
in small soft loops of towelling . . . .

she raises her arm  
sees it reflected  
on the black matting  
bright with glass  
that frames a sketch:  
three Venus Steatopygous  
wallowing in the waves . . . .

she drops the towel  
raises both arms  
one curving line of hip and breast and shoulder  
silhouetted against the low horizontals  
of bath  
and wooden shelf  
where the green fronds of a spider plant  
sprout from a flowered Victorian chamber-pot . . . .

a slight shift  
and she can eclipse its shadow  
with her belly's--  
moon-round  
scarred with gleams of water  
dark with memories . . . .

body clean  
of the many disguises  
it has taken or left:  
prim school uniform Sunday hat  
gipsy skirts swirling from the hips  
Edwardian black stockings  
to amuse a lover  
spectacles coolly imposed  
to deliver a lecture  
eyes behind sunglasses  
hands  
gloved against  
the cold dishwater  
deep in earth's dirt . . . .

behind the other arm  
she sees  
the precise containing window frame  
its clear panes  
and beyond within  
snow crabs  
ravaging the dark flourish of evergreens  
and again beyond within  
the slow horizontal swell  
of a winter ocean . . . .

driftwood  
her arm  
moves its shadow  
over the reflection  
of the water  
stretches  
towards the dark blue sea . . . .

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