

Other People's Scorpions
Rachel Feder



after H.D.

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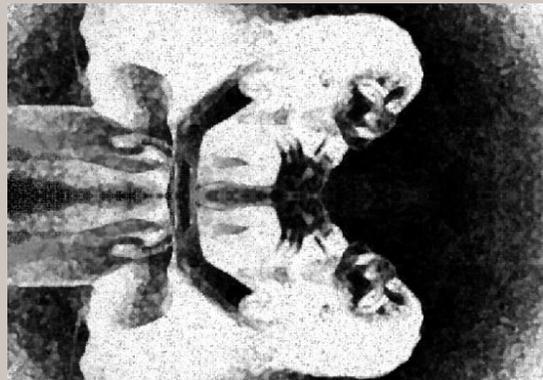
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At the sugar cereal restaurant

Sarah Allison

said in regards to babies as scorpions

but scorpions are so hard, and babies are so soft

and also because of how they are

and she cupped her hands while my child drank strawberry milk

and her sons picked out the marshmallows to show how a baby curls up

when it rolls over reaching for your arm

or ear or breast and recently someone said *there is no such thing*

as other people's children which was the sweetest lie I had heard in a long time



at the border (write it(the new Eve

at the border the new Eve steps over the threshold

her moon, like mine is in Gemini,

which is why she talks to snakes



Sarah Allison's moon is in Aries hence her desire to make
hard things her own *Aries, the Ram;*

time, time for you to begin a new spiral

Aries looks like ovaries that dip&twist



Uranus is in Taurus & so

I have come to H.D. to learn astrology

relating, I suppose, to that combination of skepticism & obsession

a sort of rational pursuit of the irrational that defines if we're being honest

modernism for me

in her astrology notebook she writes

3 decades for each Sign of Zodiac.

12 Signs = 36 decades.

72 Names of God + attributes.

72 Angels' Names - 72 degrees.

72 Degrees = 72 Names.

5~~circles~~ divisions, of days, each year.



Other people's children have one name, maybe two
 but your own soft scorpion & his many names the one he gives
himself when he is playing stingray, the one he gives the sea turtle,
 which stretches its rubber what do we want to call them fins
feet paddles *I want no shoes just socks I mean no socks*
 just shoes But who my mother wants to know her Capricorn moon
loose who who whom Who takes the child off the breast
 who follows the command and I the phone
my scorpion tired at the art gallery motherhood is a constant interruption
 but we are talking about motherhood
interrupted



Séphira_ plural, Sephiroth_ i.e. the ways in which the infinite
relates to the finite an old friend who was probably an Aquarius
tried to get me hooked on Kabbalah but it promises
a better world which is not this world wherefore this list of angels
& degrees why is the name *Moti* in here, Moti, the mouse
in your book? I say I have been *teaching myself astrology for a poetry project*
but is any of that quite right? I have been searching for Moti
the mitzvah mouse in H.D.'s 1960 astrology notebook
but what am I really trying to find I mean who moved
my cheese?



Pearls are called *moti* in India.

In astrology, they might give strength to the moon, or support a strong moon, so
if you believe in tokens and things like that

you could wear one if you wanted

we have been separating families

our nation has been separating families

parents from children and then children from their siblings

and the news is moving so fast so I need to put it in a poem

so that I am seeing it, so that I am slowing down

the news and seeing it again this is no pearl of wisdom

but can a poem be a token

can a poem be something hard inside that is coming to a shine

I want to hold each child in my arms during this hardening

all scorpions glow in the dark



What does it mean to say each sign has decades does it mean my birth
on the last day of Taurus explains why I'm the worst
of both worlds? H.D.'s later psychoanalyst Erich Heydt
prompted H.D.'s memoir of her relationship with Ezra Pound.

Regarding the placement of Uranus in Heydt's chart,

H.D. wrote,

*This might make for immense, almost super-natural
drive and power. Herschel is the so-called X-ray planet, governing new ideas, all the dangerous and healing
and newly discovered [sic] and not yet discovered "rays", radium and the like.*

In her star charts, H.D. refers to her daughter, sometimes as *The Fire Girl*,
sometimes as *Pup*.



There is a mouse or a cat
creeping across a conception chart H.D. had drawn up
for Kenneth Macpherson (Kex) who was ~~probably~~ her lover
as well as collaborator not to mention important to the history
of film and who is “The New Ram” whose chart the archivists
have not identified? It isn’t Ezra Pound, that scorpion
problem, his birth time unknown, at least to H.D., who suspected
he had Capricorn rising. It isn’t T. S. Eliot, fellow Gemini moon,
which explains the mermaids singing, nor D.H. Lawrence nor Sigmund Freud so who?



Who is the new ram & do I prefer to find out? Aries looks like ovaries
is all I'm saying it holds the stars of the spring equinox
its horn, blown, proclaims the new year
shofar so good
the first sign of the zodiac ram-horned Zeus ram-headed god
of the source of the Nile



probably not her stillborn daughter

nor yet the messiah (we'd have known by now)

The New Ram has the sun in Taurus

and both Mars and the moon in Virgo

if I'm reading things right



The deeper we get into the day farther away miles
from the last time I checked the news the easier it is not to consider
to unconsider the night terrors from which very soft scorpions refuse to wake
their hands flailing to hold your hand in the dark
so you can find them in the dark in which they glow

Notes

The lines “this is the new Eve” and “she brings the Book of Life, obviously” come from H.D.’s “Tribute to the Angels.” H.D., *Trilogy*, edited by Alik Barnstone. New York: New Directions, 1998, 101.

The lines “Aries, the Ram; / time, time for you to begin a new spiral” come from H.D.’s *The Walls Do Not Fall*. H.D., *Trilogy*, 30.

I am also indebted to Alik Barnstone’s excellent “Readers’ Notes.” In H.D., *Trilogy*, 173-201.

The quoted fragments in [4] and [6] are from [Astrology: notes 1960]. The quoted material in [8] is from [Horoscope reading for Erich Heydt]. H.D. refers to her daughter, Frances Perdita (Aldington) Macpherson Schaffner, as “The Fire Girl” in a star chart drawn on a sheet of notebook paper [Astrology: horoscopes 1953-59]. Perdita is referred to as “Pup” in a book of star charts executed for H.D. by Silvia Dobson. I continue to refer to this book in sections 9-11. H.D. Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

Biography

Rachel Feder is an assistant professor of English and literary arts at the University of Denver. She is the author of a poetry chapbook, *Words With Friends* (dancing girl press, 2014), a book-length serial poem, *Bad Romanticisms* (Astrophel Press, 2018), and a hybrid prose work, *Harvester of Hearts: Motherhood under the Sign of Frankenstein* (forthcoming from Northwestern University Press later this summer). You can read more of her astrology poems [here](#).