

Spirit of the Forest to reside within. They garden heal-all, motherwort, mugwort and parsley at the edge of the clearing. Apples are gathered and eaten with a blessing. Every morning they circle three times around the house as the earth moves around the sun. They remember the labyrinth that brought them to the forest. They celebrate the sacred times and the bloody times. The Two that is One.

Shelly loved to live up the Inlet in the lonely log house on the hill. In the land of the Sleil-waututh. The stairs from the dock went up for thirty steps. She hauled water from a spring alongside the mountain. Every evening she watched the lights from Deep Cove.

The circle of O is almost complete. The Ooze and the wells spring to their feet. We carry our weapons inside in this war. We can never forget the Creatrix who gave birth to us all—a maedenheap. We spiral, we weave, we circle, then defeat. The father has fallen, the (M)Other returns.

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## KAREN CONNELLY

### The Lesser Amazon

Last night I dreamt  
I was the salamander who does not burn in fire:  
    my lips welcomed saffron tongues of flame.  
I scurried pliant through desert grass,  
my amphibian memory algae-moist,  
hot with dragonflies.

In South America, tree frogs live  
in the pooled water of bell-shaped leaves.  
They never touch earth but make their choir  
in a ripe canopy, serenading higher  
than the skulls of hunters.

Those very frogs leap from my rhododendron  
into the kitchen sink.  
Shreds of jungle dazzle this old house.  
Where are all these vines growing from?  
This morning a parrot torpedoed over the table.  
Yesterday afternoon in the bathtub,  
after a surge of curious hissing,  
I found a nest of baby snakes beneath  
the bathmat, living red leather,  
tongues flicking an ancient orange.  
They covered my feet in an exotic reptile weave,  
wound up my shins and looped themselves  
around my waist and neck and slid anxiously  
through my slick hair.  
It took me an hour to comb them out  
and send them slithering to the garden.

It can't go on like this.  
The neighbours gossip:  
    *Has she kidnapped orangutans?*  
    *Has she given birth to panthers?*  
Birds of paradise have chased away  
the sparrows and magpies and the problem  
with peacocks is the potency of their screams.

Roses of dusk bloom to darkness.  
Mesmerizing creatures watch from the trees  
of these turquoise nights, listening  
to me rush through the rainforest of my body,  
searching for you.

Deep into cardinal soil I plunge my hands,  
probing for the roots of the source,  
hoping to plant you in this jungle  
though I know you're not native to it.

Love, my throat is the lesser Amazon.  
I want you to slide in.

Find a slim-ribbed canoe.  
Learn how to swim.

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