



BROWSE



Braving the Elements, and: Li/The Clinging, Fire

Robert Gibb

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

Braving the Elements, and: Li/The Clinging, Fire

Robert Gibb (bio)

Earth

Some days I'd wheel the clattering A-frame ladder
Into place against the building, lock it fast,
And spend hours stacking the great clay pots
On their shelves—two sets to the cubicle,
Rims clamped each about a circumference
Equal to their own. They'd take the full brunt
Of the weather, objects at rest until I hauled them
Back down, a wage-slave At last unshouldering
The globe. I passed whole weeks in a jumble,
Numb and newly widowed, with two sons at home.

Fire

I'd thought at first to fit her ashes in a lidded jar,
Clay that had also passed through the flames
And been transfigured, changed back into earth,
But now all such matter seemed too inert.

Water

Water-arum, trout-lily, salt-marsh aster were closer
To what I sought. Wild flowers the rains brought.
Days when stabs of gladness could make me weep. **[End Page 140]**

Air

In the crow's nest of the ladder I stood in a sky
The sparrows stormed, trapped inside the store.

Li/The Clinging, Fire

This hexagram, divided within and without,
is an image of the meshes of a net in which
animals remain snared.

I

A tom in full regalia, tail fanned wide,
Drumstick head at an angle, imperious and high.
I watch him strut around the parked car,
Affronted by what he's found there
Mirrored in the clear-coat -
Beard and wattles, the wampum-beaded throat.

On display, he's been trying to drive the other
Away from its covert in the fender
And now lets loose a flurry of quick hard pecks,
But where he expected flesh
There's the glance, it seems, of one beak
Off another, the taste of metal instead of meat.

Ruffled now and out for blood, he hones in again
On the bird that stabs back at him. **[End Page 141]**

II

Again today I look to see if your likeness
Appears on the Website, her pretty breasts
And leanness and cascading black hair.

Without my glasses your face is there,
And your presence houseled again in the flesh,
And it is years again before your death.

III

The light, paper comb of the wasp's nest
Tacked in a corner of the jamb, cloud-
Colored, capped like an acorn to its bough.
I watch as she fashions the airy apartments
As though gathering them from the air,

A first dusk filling the little cups
Beneath which she's suspended, tail up
And delicate, berthed already in her labors.

IV

This evening, rain and some distant thunder,
Clouds towering to monument above the river.
The downpour drives me back indoors.
The unlit rooms, a cold sky in the mirrors.

V

Across the road: bloodroot and twinleaf
And gill-over-the-ground,
Purple clematis sending out
Those vines for which there is no life

But embracing, a few wisps of last year's
Milkweed floating on the air . . . **[End Page 142]**

At our wedding you were the *Primavera*,
A spray of baby's breath at your ear,

The bouquet you tossed the bridesmaids.
There are still traces of fragrance
In the weave of that dress
I can't seem to part with, the cyme of its lace.

"The Clinging is empty in the middle,"
Says the *I Ching*, and cannot be filled. **[End Page 143]**

Robert Gibb
Lowe's Lawn and Garden Center, 2002

Robert Gibb

Robert Gibb is the author, most recently, of *World Over Water* (2007) and *The Burning World* (2004), both from the University of Arkansas Press.

Robert Gibb

Braving the Elements

Lowe's Lawn and Garden Center, 2002

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