

Elaine Equi

LEGACY

Now X is dead, so Y can be X.
And Z is dead, so A can be Z.
There's no shame in becoming someone else.
You may be even better at it than they were.
At times Z got in the way of our idea of him.
Before X was X, he was probably somebody else too.

WORD AND SENTENCE

lignify: v. To make woody or woodlike.

Daphne was lignified while fleeing Apollo.

The porn star could lignify himself at will.

siccative: n. A substance added to paints and some medicines to promote drying.

Quick, somebody throw the drowning man a siccative!

apiary: n. A place where bees are kept.

The happy couple spent their honeymoon in an apiary.

brattice: n. A partition, esp. one erected in a mine for ventilation.

Nothing is quite as cheery as a canary singing by a brattice.

flense: v. To strip the blubber or skin from (a whale, for example).

Serial killer, Ed Gein, once said he could outflense Melville in a second.

flexuous: adj. Bending or winding alternately from side to side.

Dualists claim the stairway to heaven is long and flexuous.

sastuga: n. A long wave-like ridge of snow found on the polar plains formed by wind.

Up past midnight, light writes upon the sastuga.

opuscule: n. A small and minor work.

You'd need a microscope to read his opusculum.

cresset: n. A metal cup suspended on a pole containing burning oil and used as a torch.

I got these cressets on sale at Crate & Barrel last week, along with some nice bamboo placemats.

rufescent: adj. Tinged with red.

After battle, the air glows rufescent with blood.

parasang: n. An ancient Persian unit of distance.

Wallace Stevens traversed parasangs on his way to the palace of the interior paramour, often going there straight from the insurance company.

utricle: n. A small, delicate membranous sac connecting the semi-circular canals of the inner ear and functioning in the maintenance of balance.

I tried but could not reach my utricles with a Q- Tip.

Elaine Equi is the author of many books of poetry, including The Cloud of Knowable Things. Ripple Effect: New & Selected Poems is forthcoming from Coffee House Press in spring '07. She teaches in the MFA programs at The New School and City College.