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 opuscule.
**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.

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*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.*