

ANNA GEORGE MEEK

Self-Possession

In Judea, the ancients hold the scrolls
near to themselves: within caverns, the papyri

roll out songs and laws, in fragments,
in tongues.
The body is finding

a library that the dead
have left behind.
The Dead

Sea divides
around a peninsula called

the tongue. It wears
a blue-white cloud
and a shroud of salt. I wear

my words; I am embroidered

by pain, daily, whose garment I will leave
my children. The design is
undetermined, but gently, you may

read it for yourself. You may render it
valuable. What I wear is an heirloom.
For thousands of years

after the ancients disappear, the Dead Sea Scrolls
lie dormant until the boys who wear sheepskins
find them. This day,
I have found a sleeping infant

inside me, and have loved. In *The Marriage of Figaro*,
mistaken identity finds

love, after all. Women wearing
each other's

clothes. A good story. When a white woman reads
a black man, he sometimes turns to see her

watching him. She recognizes
his clothes. Perhaps a case
of mistaken identity, but possibly

she is thinking, *I am near to you. I am near to you.*
Perhaps he interprets

Somali in the evenings for his American
cousins, but tonight, he asks the woman
to the opera. He has misread

the situation: she is a lesbian.
Tonight, another woman

has taken herself
from her home to safety, the blue-black prints
of a man in her skin. Biology is an interesting

story. The brown-haired marks of a man
appear on the hermaphrodite's skin. Pronouns

divide her. Verbs multiply her. For years,
I did not have names for the nouns

in my body.
Sometimes syntax fails. Scientists are fighting

to own the basic translations
of our human genome. Biology

is a dangerous story. The body finds
a library of letters that the dead have left behind.
I find

that the literal is singular, but metaphor
is plural. Myself, I have often appeared

in the third person. She mistakes herself
for someone she knows, for someone

she could write. She remembers
the nights of the years she has nearly taken

her own life.
I ask the woman

in the shelter to sign her name, or an X, and she doubles
over to clutch her knees with one hand, my arm

with another. We

must be here. We
may appear like the asters

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in dark fields where the shepherd boys
have entered the caves, and now,
they near the finding:

what there is to have, it is

among us.