

On following

I followed a man once,
who rode a horse,
to the side of a black pond,
& the man & the horse
fell into the pond.

& perhaps I fell into the pond
too, because then
there was nobody —
I had no body —
I was yellow foliage
on the bank,
rustling.

As a boy, I followed
mountain goats & stole
their salt rock because
I wanted these animals
to follow me, but
they scattered, fickle
& followed one another
to some secret pasture,
& I was lost.

Once, in India, a Slovenian girl broke a silence
of looking at the sea to say, follow me,
I'll show you a magical place.
& I followed her into the jungle
to a swamp that was also
a garbage dump, & I watched
how the jungle & the swamp
creoned like two lovers prebearing
over the morsels of trash,
how browning fruit peels
& old wet bread deliquesced
& sank into the phid waters
like things returning to the womb.

I tried following myself for a while, the way you follow a leader & watch his every
step, not hoping he'll trip, but sure as hell scrutinizing. I grimaced the days &
imagined myself perceived from every possible perspective. I hijacked all things
with eyes & ears & a story to tell - I hijacked the TV & the Internet &
literature, I hijacked God, & I hijacked the inanimate substances, & I even
hijacked the intervening spaces - & I told me stories about me - every day
different stories, like "if you close your arms to love, you are left holding only
yourself," & "I know something you do not," & "that was the right thing to do."
Then I didn't know what to believe.