

h a u n t

Waves

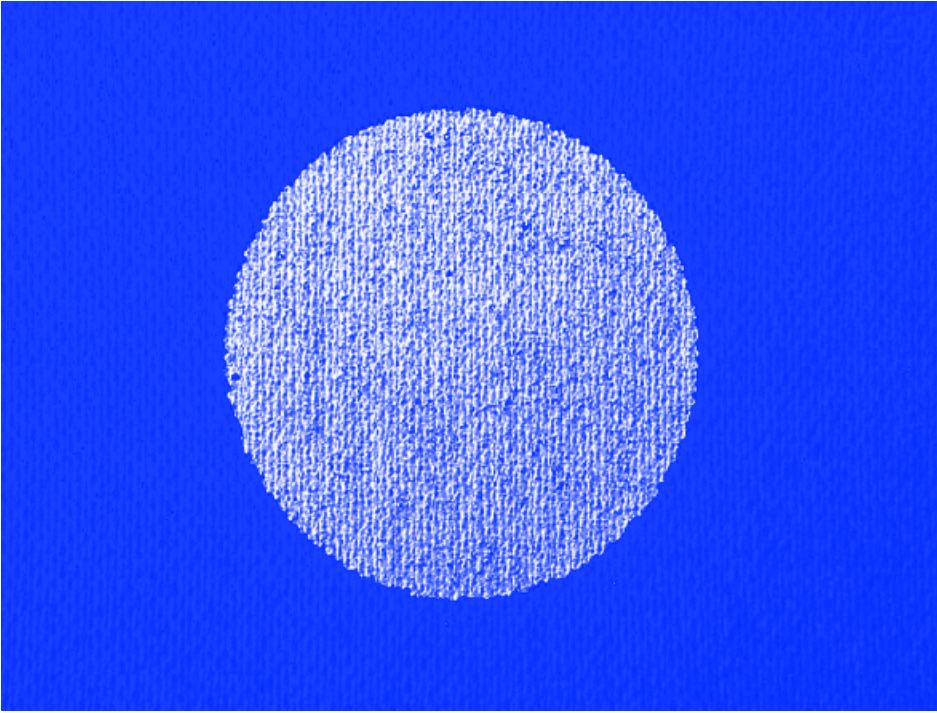
by Rachelle Sawatsky

For J.P.

What we call twilight, they called night. Stories were shorter then. Their poems were like echoes across a pond. One called out and the next responded. They were the thought equivalent of frogs' croaks and groans, low in tone and curiously expressive. In writing and speech, similes had fable-like status. When someone said something was "like something" they were very creative about it. Something wasn't defined by trying to describe what something was, but by what vices it had. What excuses and substitutions something might casually imply or push forward in line. Words had needs and physical defects. The truth came out like a bird rustling through a mass of brambles. You wondered what kind of small animal was making the noise and suddenly it appeared it's a bird that for whatever reason refuses to fly.

There were lots of snakes then too, that's one of the things A. missed most. The snakes and the moon. Like many others, A. had lived for thousands of years, however she was cursed with remembering it all. The moon was the real reason for why things were so different then. The moon was much longer. The moon was much bigger. I guess more accurately, she explained, it appeared to be bigger, because it was closer to the earth. One of the repercussions of this was that it turned faster, casting several tides a day. It took up nearly a quarter of the sky's available space, shining bright and white and casting a glow like a flashlight. During the day it settled into a soft counter-position next to the sun.

A. wore a t-shirt that said "The Moon is Feminist Art," which attracted friendly comments from cute girls at book fairs. At her lowest point, it seemed like the moon was a porthole, a window into something that used to exist, like stars, while



the whole bloody world chugged along in one direction away from it. Was it a question of distance, where the more the moon let go of the earth and charted its own course, the less influence it had? Or was today's moon missing to mortals but supposedly still there and equally powerful, like the footsteps poem?

A. took up fly-fishing. We ate dinner at her kitchen table, which was also a work table covered with sparkly bits, feathers and a contraption used for holding flies in place while you worked on them. She had a plastic box for the finished ones and pointed out the best ones for different kinds of fish and fishing conditions. She turned toward me. You know, when the moon was larger, the tides were longer. They lilted like a voice that slowly tips up and fades, she said. The waves traveled back and forth with magnetic energy. In large bays their tracks were miles long. A. simulated the motion with her hand. A. made a simulated moon with a video camera. A white polka dot on black fabric blinked on the TV screen. The weave of the fabric melded with the flickering pixelation of her Mini DV camera, rendering the difference between the two nearly indistinguishable. In the silence of the video the difference became a gulf. The constancy of the sphere was comforting. It said "moon" as I kept looking at it, but never told me what it was.

† Rachelle Sawatsky is an artist who lives and works in Los Angeles.

Image courtesy of J.P.

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