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Ianthe's alt.sex.intergen 'Poems of the Week'.      Number 32.  
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This week's theme is GANYMEDE. This is PART ONE, as there are more Ganymede poems to come from modern poets next week. Ganymede features in Greek and Roman myth. He was a Trojan shepherd-boy who the god Zeus fell in love with. To gain the boy Zeus transformed himself into an eagle and carried off Ganymede to the heavens, where the boy became his cup-bearer and bed-mate. Zeus also made the boy immortal. The myth of Ganymede was reworked as 'cover' for boy-love by many poets and artists throughout the middle ages and into the modern period. Zeus was often known as Jove or Jupiter in the poetry of the Roman Empire and after.

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- * Anon (Ancient Greece) 'Two Loves'
 - * Hildebert of Lavardin (France, c. 1035-1123)
from 'a 13th C. manuscript'
 - * "Willem de Merode" (Pseud of Willem Eduard Keuning)
(The Netherlands, 1887-1939) from 'Ganymede'
 - * Lord Thomas Babington MacAuley (England, 1800-1859)
'Virginia, a Roman Maiden'
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TWO LOVES

Zeus, to steal boy Ganymede,
An eagle's form put on;
And when he wanted sweet Leda
He turned into a swan.

Now some like girls, and some like boys;
But the moral's plain to see:
If both are good enough for Zeus,
They're both good enough for me.

Anon. Ancient Greek.

[13th Century manuscript]

Eyes, neck, cheeks, waves of blond hair.
These features of Ganymede's were a blazing fire for Jove.
Wanting to allow himself a few liberties with this boy, Jupiter
The god decreed all things should be permitted with boys.
Forgetting his guardianship of the heavens, oblivious to the god's mutterings
And to his wounded wife's tongue, and unmindful even of himself,
He snatched the Trojan to the Heavens, a star to the stars,

And then at last believed he was a god.
And so that the boy concubine would be available to touch and sight,
He gave Jove kisses by night and wine by day.

Hildebert of Lavardin.

from GANYMEDE

His beauty had reached its fullest bloom.
One more day and the timidity of youth
Would grow into the dark daring of the man.
His taut limbs on fire with yearning...
Shy and fleeting as the morning dew
Destroyed by the sun in adoration,
Shone dazzlingly in Zeus's brilliant light.
The gods hold dear that class of mortal boys;
Their splendour loves to pair with such dark nakedness.
So Zeus - He saw the sweet secrecy
With which the boy each day, body and soul,
Offered sacrifice, as he swept from his clear brow
The dark overflow of hair, as his eye
Lingered dreamily on the sky's blue brightness,
Or (the evening mist veiling his light limbs)
He, become flesh, desirous, quite alone,
Walked through the sadness of a shimmering field.

"Willem de Merode"
(Psued of Willem Eduard Keuning)

[More information about "Willem de Merode" can be found in the first issue of Paidika - Journal of Paedophilia, in the article: 'The Life of a Christian Boy-Lover: The Poet Willem De Merode (1887-1939)' by Hans Hafkamp.]

[The Ganymede motif has also been used as cover for girl-lovers, although one wonders if the poem that follows was actually written about a boy but then the genders were switched, as sometimes happens to ensure publication...]

VIRGINIA, A ROMAN MAIDEN

Just then, as through one cloudless chink in a black stormy sky
Shines out the dewy morning-star, a fair young girl came by.
With her small tablets in her hand and her satchel on her arm,
Home she went bounding from the school, nor dreamed of shame or harm;
And past those dreaded axes she innocently ran,

With bright, frank brow that had not learned to blush at gaze of man;
And up the Sacred Street she turned, and, as she danced along,
She warbled gaily to herself lines of the good old song,
How for a sport the princess came spurring from the camp,
And found Lucrece, combing the fleece, under the midnight lamp.
The maiden sang as sings the lark, when up he darts his flight,
From his nest in the green April corn, to meet the morning light;
And Appius heard her sweet young voice, and saw her sweet young face,
And loved her with the accursed love of his accursed race,
And all along the Forum, and up the Sacred Street,
His eagle eye pursued the trip of those small glancing feet.

Thomas Babington MacAuley, Lord MacAuley.

[NOTE: MacAuley may be referring to the statue of Appius, whose
fountains graced Rome, or perhaps to the great Roman road-builder
Appius Claudius.]

[See also the poem by Goethe in my previous posting on the theme of
'Singing', which refers to the Ganymede myth.]

Further reading:

Roscoe, Will. Queer Spirits - a gay men's myth book. USA, 1995.

Kepmter, Gerda. Ganymed; Studien zur Typologie, Ikongraphi und
Ikonologie. Disseration zur Kunstgeschichte, 12. Bohlau,
Cologne and Vienna, 1980.

[Contains reproductions of many major art works featuring Ganymede
from the Middle Ages onwards. German text.]

Cooper, Emmanuel. The Sexual Perspective - homosexuality and art
in the last 100 years in the West. (2nd Edition) Routledge. London
and New York, 1994.

Next week: 'Ganymede Part 2' - Ganymede poems from modern poets such as
Williams, Auden, Plomer, Szymanowski and Noel.

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