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Making Use of What Was Left

Maureen Flannery

Some distance out of time nomadic people come to a place and stop,
drop belongings and begin to build,
their early work enlivened by thoughts of a ceremonial complex,
temples rising at cardinal points against a benevolent sky.

Before long they are conquered
by some new influx of civilization-makers,
themselves displaced from a familiar place.
Temple-leveling settlers arrive
to slaughter and alter the orientation of the altar.

Second-comers stay, become at home,
comfortable as no-shoes in this culture of their bringing forth.
When not destroyed, the most valued spoils-
those shamelessly-taken gods of a former tribe-
are draped in garlands and offered-to anew by worshiping usurpers.

Successive waves of people leave things buried in the earth
or swirling in the winds that blow aspirations of the ancients
into the creativity of youth espousing new truths,
barely aware of old-mold motivations informing the idols they sculpt.

So much gets left behind in the endless going on.
Only figures of true design will be taken up
and painstakingly glued for their simple beauty.
Perennials we plant will be nursed in the next man's yard
when the blossom's drooping petals have a certain velvet gloss
to delight the eye of the gardener coming by.