

The Goodness of Created Things

Susan Elizabeth Howe

Amber, formerly pine sap where ant wings settled, feathers, the occasional tiny frog. A drop of the Jurassic Age I wear around my neck.

A Chop Wizard with its plastic cup, blades, hand crank tearing into the onion like a cheetah, membrane and flesh.

Framed color plates of *The Wild Flowers of England*, from which I am learning *bladder wort*, *purple spurge*, and four varieties of *orchis*.

Caprese salad. Tomatoes and fresh basil I attribute to God, but the peasants of Capri imagined they could milk a buffalo.

Middlemarch, giving me the English Midlands whole and Dorothea, led trusting into *The Key to All Mythologies*—its twisted passages, miasmas, vampire bats—and coming back alive.

Rachmaninoff's "Eighteenth Variation on a Theme of Paganini" in a music box of Italian inlaid wood I inherited from my mother. Sound pure as mountain bluebells, mechanism Swiss.

A Swarovski pen in rose pearl, my maroon suede notebook, a copper gill. Hand-tatted snowflakes.

Many items still to come offered now and then by the sensual god, the god of extend yourself, the god of small beautiful puzzles, the god of this was your mother's—all the minor gods of happiness and taste.