

RUSSELL THORNTON

## **GREEK FIRE**

There is an old story, old and hidden,  
and we cannot know its origin, yet we witness it set a moment ablaze,  
as when someone has hidden a thing with infinite care

then forgotten where they hid it, and then others discover it.  
History says there was once an incendiary weapon—  
a fire that ignited on contact with water and burned on water

and could not be extinguished with water. The formula for the weapon  
was a guarded secret that was lost and remains unknown.

And so history explains it—water is a bridge

for a fire to come into the world. And this was the way it was  
with the two us—we were fire walking on water  
and burning all the more brightly because we burned on water.

History says the brass head of a lion  
was mounted at the prow of a ship—a siphon pump and a swivelling nozzle  
shot the mixture out through the lion's mouth

launching streams of flames that leapt into radiance  
filling the sea waves and incinerating everything in their path.  
For our part, we were bewildered,

we were ships meeting in battle, and we shared a kind of hate,  
and each overthrew the other in the to-fro spectacle.  
And there is the old story, dateless, and in it

the love that cannot go to all because it is of the body  
must be the enemy. And this too was the way it was with us—  
except the all I wanted to go to was all of you,

and if the burning water of a story  
is love freed from time, then we were two enemies  
allowed to kiss forever within a moment, and the formula as soon lost.