

Petrichor

Adam Hughes

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Here There Be Dragons

Today we coracle spin
like nest-guarding gulls;

tomorrow we'll break through
the Pillars of Hercules.

Where longships and caravels
disappear into baleenic jaws,

we watch the Atlantic devour
the defenseless sun. Parsing

the winds, we oil-slick in present
perfect. Between the stars we raft

through sedimentary shoals
somewhere northeast of the Sargasso.

The Whale's Way, plankton-full,
hums and groans below our ribs

and we porpoise on, closing
our eyes to the serpents and sailing

beneath the sagging chin
of the tide maker.

Mapping the Eschaton

Morning curtains hang
from rods of cumulus and evaporated
sea. The coastline smells of recent rain
and cryptids and the stars seek darker
grounds. I'm a Tsimshian mask colored
with shades of ocean inlet, fire, and ash,
with eyes of chipped baleen; beak and gaze
as empty as salmon nets on dammed
rivers. I'm unkempt,
like the thatched roof hair
of feral children. I'll potlatch
my possessions and still spend
the night alone. The colder the night,
the brighter the stars.

Tonight I'll give up
the study of war. Tonight I'll find
where the Kushtaka sleep. Tonight
I'll spear my demons, jinns, and ghosts.
Tonight I'll chart these sounds and coves
until I know exactly where I've been.
The odor of downpour lingers
and I have found the afterlife.

When We're Older We'll Buy a Cottage in Lakeside

Walking down leaf blanketed streets that slope lakeward, an irresistible decline leading to boulder-lined shore, passing these homes with plaques and signs, named like pier-docked sailboats, arboreal yards and leperous paint applied half a century ago; over green-grey waters and beneath a gravel sky seagulling past the shuffleboard courts.

In the tide-thick evening, porched behind screens, rocking shared dreams in grooves carved into astroturf floors; the wave-pushed sun spots the dust that floats through the bedroom, awake and lying on damp sheets, moist from various stages in the water cycle—tree-caught dew and drops of lake bound for cumulus shores, smelling

what remains of last night's petrichor, arms and legs helixed, beginning another day of walking streets once strollered by new parents, now paced by those who have seen the future pass, realizing life somewhere between the gate, the pier, and the gulls.

Lullaby

Dream dreams of dreaming—the ones
where you wake up and you're still
sleeping; the ones where you wake up
and wonder why the covers are wrapped
around your head like sarcophagal rags;
the ones where you wake up and wonder
why you're not sleeping next to a man
in a gorilla suit. Dream those dreams
and when you wake up tell me
what you saw. It's very important

that you tell me everything. Don't leave out
the exact smell of the rain. Was it mixed
with sassafras? Was it anointed
with oil? Did it smell like spring
lettuce? Melting summer asphalt?
Did it smell like deathbed
leaves? Don't leave out
the colors or the way the sounds
shook your ribs. Remember which ribs
shook. That's important.

Are you asleep yet? Don't miss
this part; you'll need it
when the dreams turn igneous
and craggy. Remember that sleep
is nomadic, dreams are yurts,
the herds are always moving on,
the dunes are always dancing.
If you see the gull-stained cliffs
know that it was a good dream.
Know that home has found your bed.