

Two Poems · *James Solheim*

BORN INTO THE WRY, EOCENIC TOMFOOLERY OF A  
KEMMERER, WYOMING MAGICIAN'S FAMILY, HE MANAGED A  
THIRD-DECADE TRANSLATION IN HIS LOVE OF PLACE,  
DISCOVERING IN SHADOW-STRIATED BANK BENEATH THE  
SCALING REDWOODS AN INVERSE AND BALANCE TO THE  
BUTTES WITH THEIR FOSSIL FISH LIKE STAMPED-OUT  
SOUVENIRS (WHICH IN FACT OFTEN BECAME SOUVENIRS,  
GIFTSHOPPED AMONG TAIWAN TOMMYHAWKS, HAND-TALL  
GAG OUTHUSES, FAWN-TOPPED PENNYBANKS ("I AM JUST A  
LITTLE 'DEAR' / BUT I CAN CURE YOUR WOE / IF IN THIS  
SLOT / UPON MY TOP / YOU DROP SOME OF YOUR  
'DOE'"))—AND SO YOSEMITED, MILES FROM HOME, HE  
LEARNED THE LIFE OF THE PURELY VERTICAL, MEDIATING FOR  
THREE DECADES BETWEEN PARK AND PEOPLE, NEVER ONCE  
CURSING THE FAMILYDAD WORKING A NABISCO SUGARWAFER  
OUT THE TOP OF A CAR WINDOW IN THE HOPE OF  
RECEIVING ON THE GLASS A VENEZUELA OF BEARSLOBBER  
(SEAL OF THE TRUE YELLOWSTONER (OUR FRIEND WORKED  
YELLOWSTONE A DECADE TOO)) OR THE KID KEEPING A TOO-  
SMALL TROUT ON A STRINGER MADE FROM AN OLD STRIP OF  
CLOTH AND SOME WIRE (BUT NEITHER WAS HE THE GULL OF  
POACHERS), FINALLY DYING SLUMPED BEARLIKE INTO THE TOP  
OF AN AMERICAN GARBAGECAN AND THEN BURIED EARTHWISE  
(BACKHOE CHOPPING THROUGH SHALE) IN HIS BELOVED  
RANGER'S UNIFORM, GREEN WITH THE TALL YELLOW PINE  
HIS EPAULET: HIS FINAL WISH THUS BRINGING ONENESS  
FROM HIS TWO LOVES, AS IF DEATH HAD PRODUCED HIS  
ONLY CHILD

archaic feasts, beneficences

blackballed!

America in your car

beneath the rickety, disingenuous, and  
waxes of the god

the tree was dragged to the pep rally, where  
effigied abstractions died in foreign jerseys,  
lynching become shrieky teen expression. The next

ears and sealants

for the millionth

buttprint in (we must cover great realms

to get there, so I can't tell you more)

the thirty-second kid

a datum

and others

(looking down past the distended belly she saw the earlier  
child panicking with a chip of salt)—therefore

Baxter?

and thus the child entered school for the first time,  
carrying his dear little naptime mat. Upon his  
return home he discovered the great elm gone, the  
fractured light into which his ball often twirled  
now chainsawed and dragged cabled to the pep rally  
bonfire by a large truck notable for its thick  
hair of grease

It was desert there weren't many elms

but did the little nursemaid know

great bears walked earth then

years later

and he saw it—

“that awkward aeon”

of tangerine light, of lemonade rooms

, Fred

pronounced “dreadful”

it was a basement room, or air thick with mold's coughed

aether on your collar

and the lonesome dorm room was fishy with light—

remember this phrase: “radio—that fringed anesthetic”;

that night he twirled through the static fizz to

his favorite show, last of the dramas, forgotten on

some vertigoed corner of the electromagnetic

spectrum where the top forty wouldn't fit—and the  
show wasn't there, so it meant his parents were  
dead and he was on this ripped island of college in  
the dark, the last place left in the universe, “w/”  
industrial nostalgia

Beetles roared

over the dead squirrels, those heavy texts  
of the highway

like mink stoles floating above drowned socialites

“Hell,” he said—beefing it

Merrimac had it and the man's secret decoder visor  
expeshally for card playing

ruddy  
grooved

and the old photos showed a big elm's shadow  
across his cowboy legs, giddy Crocketting child  
wavering in shadowstrands, the light too gritty  
in him as if he knew the elm would be energy

“WILD LIFE BALLOGIST!”

it was like they'd never heard of biology

there

in the tan neutral shale, chipping souvenirs out of  
rock (just right to put on decorative gold stands  
(his father always wore goggles: “a rock chip in  
the eye is painful, son, right painful.” Do you understand

syllogisms

jasmine is affected by syllogisms, this is a fact  
of the great apes who will roam between them  
aerosol rabbits

flings they had had had had bad vibes

he stated reluctantly, stroking his small, round goatee:

that winged etymology

heretofore referred to as ‘a = a + 1’

the will being unwrapped of a decorum

Yogi and Booboo, “yr” (yer) friends

he had to learn the wild order, which was not

sweet or decimated—and thus he had: had  
learned the straying of beef, the beef of the  
bear's hug, how to allow the metal intrusions  
of use in certain sectors, erecting barriers  
which could be traversed only through  
dedication and knowledge and proper forms

seat of the intellect

(This is all very smart and sensible.)

and the gun emerged ever so slowly, parting the red  
velveteen curtains like a liver  
the small man who loved scars  
erector sets cracked “allover”  
he jinked—

Cornish couples combat it

names were locations

—eating the map, he quickly stoked her languishing nipples—  
and the Men in her blood began their march  
red and puckered, he fell to those mumblety  
declensions of the bestroked, talking like Gene did  
if you recall, out of one side of the mouth, the  
other pulled slack, and soon he could say nothing,  
submitting to lukewarm couch baths in which she  
petted him like a porpoise (he had become that  
alien) but neither of them were unfulfilled, gross,  
or humiliated, bodymaintenance quickly becoming  
comfortable act (anything can become comfortable (and  
how quickly!) in love), she humming with that abstracted  
cheerfulness as she rinsed him (he aware of vague  
bears, and of someone far off stroking him (which was  
like hearing distant waves repeated till subliminal),  
he also half-thinking—or one-tenth-thinking, or  
one-twentieth—himself back at the park one sun-day,  
the gray small sculpture of a chewing gum balanced  
on his lip, his arm around her by the Chevy))

America in carnauba  
indefatigable