

## Crustacean

This shell serves well enough against marauders.  
The diver beside me prefers his helmet and his iron suit.  
More flexible, he says.  
But that assumes you're going somewhere.  
He certainly isn't,  
standing over that empty treasure chest  
next to those planks from a sunken ship  
holding out his little lamp.  
And neither am I  
as I do my best to navigate these pebbles,  
protecting my soft underbelly.  
It's disappointing, to be sure--  
plastic greenery, torpid fish, murky water, parasites.  
Not what I was expecting.  
That sucker fish certainly gets around,  
mouthing her way over every surface  
swishing her sexy tail back and forth.  
But she's not going anywhere.  
And neither is that goldfish with those bulbous peepers.  
What do you think she sees as she shimmies along that wall?  
Like everyone else, she sees herself.  
And she thinks there's more to this than meets the eye.

## Passing Notice

My partner's mother's housekeeper's sister's son  
stopped on the side of the road  
to help a woman whose car broke down  
and got hit by a truck  
and broke both his legs  
so they sent him to a nursing home  
but people there started dying of COVID  
so they sent him home to his mother  
but he caught the virus anyway.

He locked himself in his room  
and his mother and her husband  
left his food outside the door  
but they caught the virus anyway  
and his mother had had cancer  
because she and her sister  
grew up next to a chemical plant  
outside Baltimore.  
They put her on a respirator  
but first her stomach died  
and then she died too.

Her husband also died  
because he had diabetes  
and the son stopped trying  
to get down the stairs to the kitchen  
with his two broken legs  
because there was nothing in it anyway  
and he didn't care anyway  
so he stayed in his room.

## Dodo

My great ungainly body unable  
to lift itself off the runway,  
my beady eyes and enormous beak  
grasping at roots and worms,  
I sell myself to sailors for trinkets  
and oranges from Madagascar.

I have been called many names:  
ostrich, vulture, turkey, albatross,  
fat, greedy, avaricious, self-absorbed,  
dodo!  
That last one hurts most of all.  
But what can I do?  
I have to eat.

I have eaten everything:  
stones, bones, rusted hunks of iron.  
I wallow in my refuse.  
It's not my fault.  
I was born in the year of the rooster.  
This awkward frame is so much to support.  
The never-ending search for food  
keeps me staring at the ground.

That pink pigeon tells me  
of the spectacular views she takes in from high above.  
She says she can see the entire island.  
And I say, "What's the use of that?  
How is it any different from what I can see  
from the top of this dung heap?  
Isn't the whole thing a fractal anyway?  
Look at those spring wasps  
dying by the thousands.  
What have they seen with their complex eyes?"

But that's not how I feel.  
The truth is I'm desperate to fly.  
The captain and his mates  
all laugh at me and my paltry stumps.

I ruffle and puff my feathers with pride.  
Daily I threaten to lift myself into the air.  
But pride is all my genes have to show for themselves.

Pride is the mother of logic.  
"Who needs travel?" I say.  
"What has it gotten these sailors?  
Nothing but scurvy and clap."  
Yet all I want is to go with them.  
That, and to be recorded in the ship's log.

New York Clearing  
after the public sculpture by Antony Gormley

The passing garbage barge is a sunflower.  
The helicopter hovering over the highway  
reporting the traffic jam  
is an aria.  
The red sky understands everything:  
the shape of each island,  
the trough of each wave,  
how each arm that reaches out to touch the water  
leads back into itself.  
The concrete clearing is an offering.  
The end of the pier is a confluence:  
stone, steel and water merging into fog.  
The fog takes in the plastic containers  
strewn about the lawn  
and the lawn itself, so full of life,  
rising up out of its field,  
refusing to be walked on.  
It consumes passing tugboats,  
tall buildings, even reliable islands.  
Bending down on one knee  
I unloose my hidden chalice  
and pour my blood over the water.  
The harbor turns red.  
The fog returns to me  
and gathers me in.

## From My Office Window

What great bird  
could command the harbor  
in this frenetic wind?  
What avatar could coax me  
from behind this pane of glass?  
High above the harbor  
I wait for you,  
you who lifted me  
off the ground  
and made a promise  
about the order of things  
that even I could keep.  
See, you said, it's not that hard.  
It happens by itself.  
Like starlings around the little park,  
like kites around the meadow,  
round and round the harbor we go  
with our chairs beneath us  
and our arms foolishly flapping  
as we always do  
as I always love you  
as I always trust the wind.  
How could you have known  
that Governor's Island  
is shaped like your ear?  
How could you have known  
the Brooklyn Bridge  
wears your generous grin?  
I, the Statue of Liberty  
call to you this now and then,  
swooping my hand down  
into dark blue waters,  
lifting out the rain  
and sprinkling it over you,  
my island, my harbor  
and my sweeping sky.