

Cape Cod Elegy

Cold wind whips a beach by a bay,
nine gulls float slowly on gusts,
in sand lies a dead coywolf,
fur russet, grey and white,
still fluffy, ears soft,
legs spread like he's still running.

Sand has drifted over his mouth,
jaws agape showing ivory teeth.
Was he looking for snails or limpets?
Maybe he was hoping for the dead cormorant nearby
when last night's icy wind cut through his fur
as he tried to run one last time.

Near the solitary beach coywolves
hide in pitch pine woods within sight
of Wellfleet's white water tower—
part wolf, part coyote,
elusive as sea tides.

On edge of the marsh a skim of ice,
everything grey and white
like the dead coywolf's fur
in tufts between his paw pads and claws.

In the cottage yard a single rose
still blooms despite frigid November wind,
wine, warmth and supper
only take me back to the beach
where the gale whips sand through his fur.
Then I realize it's not merely wind,
but coywolves howling,
music from the marsh.

Elegy at a Yard Sale

A house can be haunted by those who were never there. Louis MacNeice

Under an awning wait furnishings,
exposed and alone without their house,
emptied of the maple table
where first sun shone each day
on coffee cups and worn silver spoons,

emptied of four-posted oak bed
where they loved and awoke, emptied
of matching bureau whose drawers
held their socks and underwear.

This house is empty of the cradle
where their children first slept,
empty of carpets chairs, knives, spoons
and forks, of mops and clocks.
Its window panes reflect bare floors.

Everything waits in the yard where signs advertise a sale,
two crows swoop low, curious about glittering bauble,
while the house waits for its furnishings to go.
All the clocks are silent.
A car doors slams and the yard sale begins.

Crows caw once, twice, and circle over.
Soon the oak bureau then their maple table,
bed and baby cradle then clocks are gone.
The house is empty, too bright, too quiet.

Chimera

I wake up kissing a pig,
she asks me if I think there's a God,
even before she asks me what I'd like for breakfast—
I know better than to say bacon—
scrambled eggs with biscuits and grits, please.

Human stem cells can be legally implanted
in pig and other animals' embryos—
it was in the news yesterday—
human brain, liver and heart cells.

I can feel her heart beat,
different than before when she was just a pig,
71 beats a minute just like mine
(except during sex or exercise)
but I'm not ready to jog with a pig—
and I can't even think about sex—
so many nipples.

She throws on a nightie,
I hear her hooves clatter downstairs,
smell coffee.
I wonder if I'd be more compatible
with a sheep or a dog.

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“Strange Beasts: Why Human-Animal Chimeras Might Be Coming” Rachael Rettner, Senior Writer

Silence Comes

This morning the last geese passed south
a few honking stragglers in a small vee
brown leaves fluttered in beech trees
I realized how silent it was
snowflakes whispered on my coat
the only other sounds
a few chickadees calling from pines
and a distant train whistle

Mailbox

alone on a hilltop
gray paint flaking
flag missing
beside a narrow road so little-used
grass grows down the middle
its broken door hangs by one hinge
vibrates in the breeze
a faint harmonica off key

most days when I pass it's empty
this winter morning snow blows everywhere
one crow perches on its crest
today a postcard
a drugstore circular
and a little snow inside
the house cannot be seen from anywhere

two sets of footprints in a dusting of snow
someone has come and gone twice
come too soon
waiting perhaps for this card
or just waiting
I can't tell where the tracks come from
and wonder who lives in such loneliness
that mercy hinges on a postcard