

In Myth

In Myth

Sometimes kings raise a foundling—
it didn't work out well for the Pharaoh—
but the opposite seems more typical.
Royals, gods, drop into the hands
of commoners. Gilgamesh, they say,
was hurled as an infant from a tower.
An eagle broke his fall; a gardener took him in.
Satyavati Kali, the female twin found in a fish
was handed back to the fisherman.
And there's the Nazarene carpenter.

What happens to such parents? Do they win
a suite in the palace? Or do they remain at home,
fused to their roles: gardener, fisherman, carpenter,
rising early, low as dew on grass,
moving to their tasks, unchanged
by the glory they served,
set in their motions like planets,
pausing now and again in their labor
to be kissed by lapping waves,
to hear the grain of the wood
gently praising their name.

In Myth

Immram (A Rowing Out)

After a long aching haul
the heavy oak oar grows light in my hands.
My back bends easy, blisters fall away,
and grey mist shimmers gold. Water ripples silver.
Boat ribs creak bronze. Every emerald fish aligns
to see me forward. Sapphire birds shriek the way.
This is not like any voyage the myths told tell of,
except that there is much moving West.
No exotic islands, no monsters.
Only rowing, and the shimmering mist,
singing always in syllables, never in words.

Something about all this light, and syllables,
makes it devilish hard to remember if I'm running away
or toward. From. To. Prepositions are blisters—they sting
and fall asunder. Row. The oar is so weightless now
like light itself. Something else is pulling it for me.
Maybe it was always so. The syllables quicken,
cooing in waves. Some beacon beyond the mist
is bidding me speak, teaching me my long forgotten voice
with a mother's patient tongue.

In Myth

Memorial Day, 2015

What are those? she asked as we strolled home from Montessori.

Rows of small white crosses lined the church lawn.

They're supposed to help us remember, I said.

Remember what?

People who fought in wars. Lots of wars.

Oh. Are they dead?

Yes, they died fighting.

Would they be alive if they didn't fight?

No, they'd still be dead. Everyone dies sooner or later.

Are they under those baby crosses?

No. No one knows where you go when you die. Some people think there's a peaceful place, a garden. Other people think you come back as something else. Like a fox, or a rabbit.

Or a flower?! Like those flowers right there?!

Maybe. No one knows. Maybe those flowers used to be little boys and girls once.

And then she let go of my hand and hugged my leg, and I knelt
and hugged her back, and we held on as tight as we could
as a spring breeze scattered us gently down the street
in soft white pieces.

In Myth

Le Grand Guignol

Not until curtain fall do I notice the empty
theatre seats surrounding me, and stop clapping,
already forgetting what show I had seen.

In a deserted foyer
popcorn cools, crushed into carpet.
Cola fizzes in cups.

Outside, the sky is raspberry-ripple.
I nearly tread on roadkill – life flattened
to two dimensions, still twitching. Oddly familiar.

Traffic lights idly change over the vacant street. Red.
A distant ice-cream van, manically happy,
haunts the barren city, hunting for children,

its off-key music rounds the block,
winding a tightening circle.
Nothing is more terrifying now

than the grass growing from pavement cracks.
Each blade whispers, *Know this, know this:*
We shan't all sleep in death.

In Myth

Good Folk

After chowing
throw the bones in the ditch.
Don't knock the piss bucket.
Night's too cold,
but the bonfire burns.

We judder and lurch
around spitting flames,
stamping gods,
hands on holsters—
full of our rights
but slurring the words.