

Flora and Fauna

Sparrow

Eating virtually anything in small quantities,
the true sparrow nests in cities,
most common, perhaps, of wild birds.

Its stubby beak can hardly be heard
leaking its ill-perceived lusty squeaks,
as it jitters to avoid the sweepers (nearby pigeons undisturbed).

Though, the comparative paucity of the old world
emberizidae can be attributed to the way
in which the name 'passerby' so closely resembles 'passerine'—

a bitter temperament conditioned
by vying after food in a hard environment,
this particular word signifies both bird, and sidewalk nutriment.

A Death in the City

Siren wail in the black street;

the nightingale sings.

Peppered Moth (Melanism)

This one's melanistic,
the eyes on the wings
beside it peering
as if curious about
life as a silhouette.

And it's nearly always that,
unless its perch on the pale
tree trunks suddenly turns black
with soot—unlikely,
though it would justify its
existence on classroom
graphs and as a principle of
“religious” resistance.

An environment fit for it,
a dark thing
preferring night-flying.
A shade always
seeking eyeless
for a mate;
for one that waits
from the first, from imago,
secreting wind-borne
pheromones,
knowing the he'll
trace the scent.

The male no longer a flat
twig mimic (shading being
the primary visual cue
that makes things appear
solid), seeks and in his search
he finds knowledge
consists of more than research.

Hamadryas

The male cracker butterfly,
a thing most arboreal,
marks its turf by clicking
a serpentine structure in its wing.

Its territory being
the bark that matches
its wing coloration, for
it feeds on things dead or dying:
rotten fruit and dung;
such a diet allows it to
prefer unoccupied spaces.

It seeks neither food nor replaces
aesthetics with convenience when
seeking a sight for courtship.

Its resonance box is nearly
indestructible
hence its being able,
unlike its namesake the tree nymph,
to climb four trees daily,
maintain flight capacity,
and all the while remain cryptic.

Cherimoya

“The most delicious fruit known to men.” - Mark Twain

Hints of banana, peach,
pineapple, even strawberry;
sherbet-like in texture,
giving to a slight touch
when ripe, as a pear might—
you’ve even been said
to give a tongue a hint of bubblegum—
or bubblegum gives a hint of you,
O *Cold Seeds*, O Custard Apple.

In her hands you’re like the Andes—
sappy, woody, with rust-colored hairs,
your sires coat the slopes
of that range, holding aloft
the likes of Quito, Bogotá, and La Paz—
here you sit, heart-shaped, leaf over leaf,
unbroken. Like a city in the flat plateau
of her palm, you teem with flavors
of which on other planets they cannot dream.

Mother Earth is more than she seems.
Wide mouthed, I feel your skin
against my teeth and gently break you.
And we, too, thank her for your descent.

Hinoki Cypress

Globose cones hang in pairs
from *the tree where god stayed*
and its leaves scaly and obtuse
wave stiff, black against
the white sky in Kiso.

Others form the looking-pillar in a Noh;
or a table tennis blade,
or fashioned into a masu hot with sake.
The scents all the same,
a pungency that can fill a hall.

One remains *where god stayed*,
bearing teeth of double-sided green,
knowing the trim bonsai and
the hay fever and the temples, the shrines,
but all the time its deep red-brown bark
possessed by a god or some such
fierce resisting thing.