

Spring 2020

Fortean Gods

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Recommended Citation

Munde, Christopher (2020) "Fortean Gods," *CutBank*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 91 , Article 16.
Available at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cutbank/vol1/iss91/16>

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CHRISTOPHER MUNDE

FORTEAN GODS

EUPHORIA MYTH

The hurricane traded our ospreys, our
Dock strays, our angels and gods to the depths,
As it siphoned the saltwater creatures out into
Our lakes, and then flushed all the lake bottom
Lurkers on shore.

The first one that I claimed for myself

Bore a face I recalled from a Renaissance map,
And the next from an illumination whose teeth
Shaped the Latinate phrase *as the spirit stood*
In great confusion, while some, like the angler fish,
Were all mouth,

So my icebox was stacked

like a guillotine basket and riddled with cold little suns;
That rank universe stuttered like children amid the Bud Lights.
Meanwhile, outside the port's jurisdiction, the men
Who had been here since dawn cleaned a fish
With the eyes of a dog,

With the face of a man, with

The least garbage meat that I had ever seen,
And then, when they were done, the three stapled
The hide up to dry. When our eyes met, they all
Seemed to know precisely what I wanted to say:
Any deconstruction will be wasted on us,
At this shore,

On this day, and the creature's head slumped on its stalk.
One man called his catch *Nessie*, and used a paintscrapper
To sliver its slime from his soles, while another
Assigned *Ogopogo* to slithering acres of tail that resolved
(He presumed, in a head)
Somewhere deep in the lake.

Here, amid such abundance and incomprehensible novelty,
Who would be bothered to risk diving in just to take
Inventory of all that we'd lost? There, below,
In the inverted waters, where valkyries
Shat at the sky:
Their half-memorized faces so ordinary

That they'd probably rinse off like marker, leach
Into the water and lace the new denizens' breath.
So that's why the ice box and the tackle, the gutting and drying,
My clipping of angler's stalks for their lights and the way
That each burst like an exclamation
(*Ogopogo!*) when pulverized under my teeth.

CONVICTION MYTH

So, once it's lured into or out from hell,
The lobster's chipped to bisque before the crowd
Who all mistake the tomalley for heart,

The crowd no older than my students, who
Maneuvered my attention to the news
That one had been lured from or into hell.

His face returns in the wet halo of
The garnish caviar, the green excess
Of tomalley. Mistaken for a heart,

His flowline peers' staccato processing
Warped fish slime on his forearms into welts,
And whether they were lured to or from hell,

Salt water sponges filled the mermaids' mouths.
My student laid a sheet across each one's
Midsection, took the tomalley and heart.

Each jettisoned her eggs onto his shoes;
He slogs through jail in delicacies draped,
But weathers the commute between two hells,
As tomalley is taken for a heart.