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Comments by Cal Bedient on poems by Patricia Goedicke

Patricia Goedicke

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I like the kelp-dance-and-sway of this version;
it feels less laid-down, like the other one,
and more line-alive and in process. But

IDEAS

minus "of meaning" and "chaotic / teeming currents"

The thin bars of the traps we let down
to catch the gossiping lobsters of meaning, mere
table talk or the deep, ongoing
history of the sea's long standing
affair with earth and where we stand on it
and how, each clever cat's cradle
we weave for ourselves keeps shuddering
at every passing fin, each explanation
we invent shines fitfully
but proudly against the chaotic
teeming currents it lives in.

And wants to make love to,
illuminate even those dark
seething carpets of other, wilder
hungrier scholars that seem almost
to swallow us. In rippling schools. Masses
of small bottom fish, corpuscles
like fire leaping across chasms
or slower, oozing into thick
crusted layers. The seep of cells
worm-like, secretly dividing
and then multiplying into live
clumped coral. Buzzing. With eager
electric hooks, pronged feet, tiny
red starfish hanging all over

the eyehole we peer through, what
ceaseless activity, would they tear us
apart?
No, they are too blind,
too random for that. But both kinds
of colonists urgently need
to cuddle, make up to each other
now. Because every answer
we get comes caked with the prickly
slime of barnacles, the rickety
cages we erect against sharks
and other predators are frail
ghost crabs. See where their near see-through
slats sway in the hissing crackle
of the cold soup that created them.

This version also to Mairon

PATRICIA GOEDICKE

This poem does what I least like in your work--it slides
or jumps from figure to figure without any
care for coherency. Okay, a "montage"
poetics has laws of its own, but there's a difference, however fine,
BUCKET

between dispatching an image and abandoning it too soon
for something different.

Each day the body puts on its pounds of tar.
Dark, viscous. Who can climb out of it?

One foot at a time. Lift. Fall back. Lift.

It is like dragging an iron bedstead behind you
all the way down to breakfast.

Try to shrug one shoulder without feeling it in the other.

Ponderous food particles dissolve
like rotten fruit, into islands of wet mulch.

The cargo in the hold shifts ominously,
the hull whistles and creaks.

Slow. Wallowing around in there with a few rubbery bones
and the brown spongy clumps of the pancreas, liver, etc.

Friends tug at the bars, make faces at you to come out.

But the bucket you live in is an anchor
loaded with damp stones, the boat will not move without it.

Heavy chemicals pour, from one chamber
to another.

And you're stuck in them like a shoe;
you'll never make it to the bridge. of a ship?

How keep the head above waterline?

And the others trapped in their bunks
all around you, Help, Help.

You can't if you live in a bucket

not all around you if you're in
a bucket/anchor.

This is chaos for the reader's would-be-cooperative
imagination!

(stanza break)

These opening lines
are odd and fresh,
but there's a slight
hesitation involved: climb out
of the body (as tar), or
get the body to climb out of the
tar? I can do this--
it's not
a real challenge
and the point of it is
ambiguous, anyway

buckets aren't chambered
chemicals under a water?
you can't need a bridge if

Peek your nose out the top the top of bucket? anchor? boat?
and dance with the Big Dipper you can't. tar pile?

The bowels won't let you, the hormones handcuff you
to whatever weather they want.

One afternoon when your ears are ringing
in solitary

let go. Drop everything. Descend

Arresting and beautiful from
here on down ...

like a diver into the vast
rustling folds of the ocean

and just hang there. Silent
as a pearl in an oyster but weightless.

revolving like a feather on its stem
or a thought:

it is like being a thought.