

Wilderness House Literary Review 12/2

Ed Meek

Sail Away

5000 years ago

Mesopotamian square sails

propelled boats

as long as the wind lasted.

Egyptians added oars

manned by slaves

to take up the slack.

Arabs rigged their sails

to split the wind, tack and jibe,

while Vikings molded the hull with a keel

that cut waves down to size.

These boats were the bridges

that connected the dreams

of civilizations—

old worlds and new...

Today to sail means to dream

of leaving land behind

to skim the surface of the water

like flying fish.

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Great Blue Heron

The town had cleared the overgrown banks
of Pine Tree Brook,
leaving a swath
wide enough for walking.

I was on my way to Pope's Pond
where no-one ever seems to go
though the woods are littered
with empty cans of beer,
paper scraps and broken glass.
I was looking at my feet,
engrossed in thought.

I must have startled the heron
from his perch on the bank
overlooking the brook
in search of fish, frogs, mice
and birds naïve enough to come too close.

He skipped directly across my path
on those crazy stick-like stilts,
yellow beak level with my chin.

He lifted his wings--wide as I am tall
and carried his airy body aloft
to the branch of a birch.

He was bigger than a swan
with none of the swan's elegant beauty.

He stared at the brook and squawked
like a crow with a cold. Ugly
and ungainly as he was,

it was grand to get so close
to a great blue heron
in the suburbs, and yet

it was strange,
crossing the line
between his world and mine.

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Killdeer at Stonehill

In June, robins hunt field mice in the quad.
A mockingbird fools a cardinal into thinking
he has friends in the area. I see a killdeer--
farmland bird returning to the site of a former farm--
resting under a maple; I creep up
to get a better look, expecting she'll take off,
yet she remains and begins cheeping in protest--
Deeyee, she says, deeyee. I see
the fear and anger in her eyes
and spot the four grey speckled eggs
in the nest behind her.

Suddenly I remember driving along old 6A on Cape Cod.
The car in front stopped short;
I swerved around to his left
hitting my brakes too late when I saw
the mother and six ducklings
waddling single-file across the road.

I won't harm your eggs, I tell the killdeer, backing off.
They're safe, I tell her, for now.