Poems

Brian Henry
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Abstract
DISCOVERY, PORCH
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DISCOVERY

Of course no one sets out to discover artificial insemination, natural selection, wooden dentures while removing the garbage or paying the cleaner or adhering to the missionary like an upright Quaker: no one is adequately prepared for the sight of the unfamiliar for the unfamiliar sight precludes preparation (not to over-emphasize vision's importance, being the faultiest of our senses, open to trickery at every global corner: instances of vision's failures dwell everywhere, as do instances of failures caused by those failures – the veteran vacationer who neglects to remember that abandoning one's spot is always a risky venture (why someone recommended in some handbook or other to slip some kid a fiver to sit by the meter and say he's waiting for his father) – others' fortunes have been made while some of us rehearse: cases have been settled, fines levied, and the town's coffers topped off while we earnest myopians squint into the future, on the verge of deciding to settle a colony or further wander, unable to see beyond the third row in the theatre, if the woman on the screen is laughing or dry-heaving: how much richer our home movies and moving patterns would be if we relied on another to show us to our seats – if we let the tongue be our usher).
PORCH

The last resort? To inch along, naturally.
And the cultivation of a pure anything.
Pollen is our primary cash crop,
as in Short Pump and Powhatan County.
The pharmacist works over-time sorting antihistamines,
his nose now mucronate in its glaring.
Oh the fragility of the nasal cavity!
The etiolation of devotion!
Margining profits from phlegmatic effulgence!
Not for this do we hold our noses
to the learned tomes. Febrile hours are upon us.
Witness: the distribution of cotton swabs
to the exclusion of other respectably perfect implements.
(The competition folded years ago, –
a classic case of mismanagement
and weaning from the trough;)
such a laissez-faire languor can lose thousands,
more if you’ve got it.) (And the opportunity costs involved:
unthinkable!) The ledger has superseded the finger
as gesture – the platonic and the downright erotic.
The prescription should be a carpal affair.