A Landscape Perspective for Louie

Anne Raymer

Triangles are what prevail, those pathological Christian symbols connecting points on the plain to form boundaries around sacred burial grounds or wall in secret gardens here in Indiana.

When Sebastian showed up last fall, all shot up full of arrows, there was a humming mow of clover and Christopher Robin curled once around my ear. But no. This prehistoric bird, all bone and beak, nothing about him needing sleep, resisted the earth and bled when one or another of us moved too close to touch an arrow. Sometimes I’d be brushing my teeth or stirring some Rice Krispies into hot marshmallow and I’d feel the shift of the plain that came when Sebastian shook his cage.

So, Louie, you celluloid scholar you, I almost believed you about the two kinds of people, Louie, remember the Shoot Then Cook/ Cook Then Shoot Universe of Two, Louie? But you forgot Sebastian, that ancient cerulean heron. We need three, Louie, something to lift us off and away from the infinite line between A and B, Louie, a place for Sebastian who neither cooks nor shoots but watches.
A sestina for my ancestor:
   On his arrival and survival in America.

 règle papcynski

He came across an ocean, to America.
Left his homeland with a kiss and a wave.
There were many things he didn’t know;
but undaunted he came ahead, for food,
for dreams anew and to get a monkey
off his back. Stared the future in the face.

I see a photograph of a drawn face
Dreams were made of promises in America;
Land of milk and honey, grain in amber waves.
He came to see the facts. He’d know
the dreams so sparingly. Freedom and food
are illusive to he who survives in his labor like a monkey

trained to dance, by the organ grinder. The monkey,
and the immigrant do what they can to survive. Face
the cruel and humble existence of beginning in America.
Immigrant dreams are quickly changed, as a wave
shifts the sands. Did he cry at night to know
that his dream had gone rotten? Like food
left unattended too long. The freedom and food of his soul hidden away. The monkey is ruled by the organ grinder and the man must face that he too is a servant but to a new master, now in America. The same life he lived before the endless waves of the ocean journey, again he'd come to know.

Perhaps I am – I hope I am wrong! Did he know the simple joys of his choices? With food enough, perhaps he bowed to pray, not a captive monkey, but a thankful man, with a smile on his face. He could greet each man as his equal in America, Never forced to kneel, but exchanged a nod and wave.

Today with each new generation a new wave of hope rises up from within. Please know, you brave man and understand what food of freedom you have sewn here. The monkey on our back is our own challenge to face however we may wish, because you came to America.