

OF THINGS ODD AND THEREFORE BEAUTIFUL

Your lovely obsessions
calm these blue mornings
scuffed by the voices
of hungry jays.

What in sleep we remembered
crumbles like birdbell seeds
rain-loosened into mulberry shade.
Which are the animals
we adopt for ourselves today,
a blend of swimmers,
amblers and flyers?
From duckweed to palm trees,
to beyond and below,
we move and are moved.

At the zoo
each foot of these flamingos
collapses upward as it's raised
out of their pool,
black hooked bills
straining the water
in s-trails.

It is easy to imagine
feather-stitched bones,
the keeper's saw
that made their wings two-thirds
and independent of wind,
cries like a rusty stroller wheel.

They rest on top
of themselves
like a bright pillow,
two feet above the grass
on one locked knee,
with the other leg
stuck out to dry.

They seem to have
wire skeletons,
coathanger architecture
twisted into something
that balances.

Maybe they've fallen
off a carousel
and no one noticed.
I don't know.

It is here among
these logy acrobats
you say, *Marry me*
if you know I'm dying.
For the benefit.

But not until then.
So like you.

Yet, we wander quiet
to the chimpanzee
shaking the storm
out of its cage,
spitting through the bars
at all the jeering adolescents,
until finally it gives
only a matted profile
and a look at fingers
too close to our own.

For the rest of the afternoon
I wonder about that time
when I'm supervisor
of your bone bits and ash,
would it be ok
if I put them
in with the elephants,
when they dust themselves
behind the ears
and under their bellies,
or toss sloppy bundles of timothy
onto the barren pastures
of their backs,
where you could ride
queen of things odd
and therefore beautiful above us all.

WALTER PAVLICH