

Ken Meisel – Two Poems

Sea Gull, on the Delray Bridge

Now,
 an afternoon sunset
 the murky hue of drought beer
 begins its polluted descent

across the Delray Bridge,
 here, in southwest Detroit,
 where black piles of slag
 host exalted white sea gulls

and swooping marshmallow clouds,
 and the tired stroll of men
 to the bars begins again.
 Now the cornstarch sunset

shingles across the bridge
 and the lazy, tethered boats,
 bobbing sideways
 in the golden, oil-green broth

of the Rouge River
 are momentarily stirred
 in the breeze's onset,
 and they linger there,

caught like slabs of salt pork
 until a slough of clouds
 obscures them,
 and the sunlight shingles

across the backs of boys
 riding their bicycles home
 over the bridge's terminus...
 and a solitary sea gull

lands quickly on a piling here,
 and he squawks harshly –
 as if a pebble were caught
 in his throat,

and he shouts out loud
in a kind of hunger or protest,
like something coughing out
sound and fury

to the end of the day,
to the close of summer.
Yesterday I stood here,
feeling the sturdy bridge

with my hands again,
gripping it tightly.
I've come back to it,
readying myself again

for god knows what –
for the ending days of summer
that will burn away
all the strength and purpose

within me to winter winds again,
to the sudden chill and to air
tasting like salt-rising bread,
and car exhaust dousing

my lungs with soot.
We are young once,
our throats clogged
with pebbles,

with heat shingling
across our young backs
as we ride our bicycles
back home.

Let me remember this sea gull,
strident here,
shouting
out loud

his sound and his fury
into the heap of mountain slag.
Shouting his name into vibrancy,
shouting his might.

King's Fish Market, Upper Peninsula, Michigan

Sky, the thick cloudy puffed-up hue of mayonnaise,
and morning fog clinging wetly to the dull shrubbery

beside the two lane highway like the strange, roaming
shapes of old logging contractors and their handy men

floating through tamarack in order to attend church –
and the quick glimpse of a sand hill crane striding

elegantly and silently through the undergrowth to roadside
to pick at something, his mate stepping behind him

as we drive quickly past, en-route to the Mackinaw Bridge,
a slice of a mud creek the color of brown roux

just visible to us, and two boys aimlessly fishing in it –
probably for trout and maybe for a half-blind turtle

as the rain, smelling of table salt, thyme and pepper
begins just now, and it blesses the old smoke house

erected here at the junction where fish – whitefish –
dangle and bob, getting smoked-up for the market

where we stop, and I photograph them hanging dead –
like captured, strung up, deep water gnomes.

Ken Meisel is a poet and psychotherapist from the Detroit area with publication credits that include *Midwest Gothic*, *Cream City Review*, *Boxcar Review*, *Rattle*, *Ruminate*, *San Pedro River Review* and *Concho Review*. His most recent book is *Scrap Metal Mantra Poems* (Main Street Rag: 2013). His book, *The Drunken Sweetheart at My Door*, is forthcoming in January, 2015 from FutureCycle Press.