

Ken Craft – Two Poems

Star Sailor

Hands big as the crab nebula,
raw knuckles atop metacarpal
rakes, skin mottled with islands
of milk and cold clay.
Dogged grip on net, leaning back hard
against nothingness, skiff riding the star
trough of Corona Borealis.
Neck caged by cords, Adam's apple
tied by swallowed knot of grunts,
the star sailor trolls heady depths
for dwarfs and giants, reds and blues,
Greek heroes and beasts
pinned like icy insects
on the black silk of celestial seas.

Earthmen in space-station portals mouth
hails and jeers as his ship passes.
Net holes too large! Fabric too weak!
But the sailor drifts on,
leaning, pulling against the grace
of infinity.

There is dignity, even in losing a comet,
pride, even in watching it flop
against the firmament's hull, leap
into the bearded currents of Capricorn.
And what of meteors that get away?
You cannot harvest what will not be rescued.
A sailor toils on, sniffing open clusters,
tacking from whirlpool galaxies,
hauling in silence and loneliness
for a galley that will never feed him.

Pliny Instructs

(after Annie Dillard's The Pilgrim at Tinker Creek)

Though he did not bear witness himself, Pliny
shared stories of Portuguese mares that raised
flapping tails to the gale so they would
conceive foals swift as the wind.
Pity the Portuguese stallions, ears bent back
in stiff Iberian blasts, enduring heirs
apparent from southerlies off the sea!
What Pliny left out in his provincial Roman
fancy were the proud lady sockeyes of Alaska,
how they turned tail to the river, pectoral fins
fanned against the rush, heads blunted
against bracing flow, rocking to the slippery
lust of arched air over whitewater ecstasy.

Ken Craft is a writer and teacher living west of Boston. His poetry has appeared in numerous literary journals, most recently *Gray's Sporting Journal*.