

EDITORIAL

AS THE WINTER holidays approach and I rush in circles doing mad battle against looming deadlines, interminable traffic and an inevitable cold, I am sustained by the promise of a few dozey late-December afternoons in which eggnog and pajamas will feature prominently. And so, I was filled with delight upon discovering John Tagliabue's poem "When Sometimes Awkwardness is Almost Fitting." Here it is:

My
long
woolen
underwear
follow
me
around
a
little
loosely
like
some
inexact
but
pleasing
thought.

In his lively, thoughtful essay about Tagliabue, Gary Grieve-Carlson celebrates the poet's ability to quietly negotiate the relationship between the cosmic and the comic in a manner that instills a deep attentiveness and sense of "plenitude" in his readers. As such, I think Tagliabue might have appreciated Arthur Bull's "Blue Mat," which is also about mindfulness—as represented in the vision of a slug that crawls across a yoga mat, "moving as though all its senses / were concentrated in two fleshy horns, / their round nubs stressing and straining / to extend perception to the whole universe."

Tagliabue was American. He spent much of his adult life living in Maine, not far from where another famously attentive writer spent many

summers. I am thinking of Elizabeth Bishop, the sometimes Nova Scotian, whose presence also permeates this issue. Thomas R. Moore's poem, "Great Village House, Nova Scotia," pays homage to Bishop's masterful autobiographical story "In the Village," which counterpoises the rhythms of rural life with the scream that marked her mother's descent into deep depression and psychosis. "A scream, the echo of a scream hangs over that Nova Scotian village," wrote Bishop. More than sixty years after the story was first published, Moore considers how that scream reverberates in a town where "logging rigs rev" and spring rivers "urge Cobequid Bay beyond the berm."

Bishop is often remembered for her meticulous representation of the physical world. For me, this is most evident in her descriptions of animals, like the enormous moose that "looms" in the middle of a road, "towering, antlerless / high as a church, / homely as a house" ("The Moose"). Perhaps it is the smile evoked by the phrase "homely as a house," but I think Bishop would have been charmed—as you will be—by David Sapp's poem "The Hen," which imagines a hen and a farm dog riding to town in a farmer's jalopy:

an odd couple that got along
in a curious unison, cocking
their heads at passing sights;
she clucked as a fretting wife
in low, wary comments
and the occasional, excitable cackle,
from him, a growling "humph."

Unlike Bishop's "otherworldly" moose or Bull's precocious slug, Sapp's animals are delightfully domestic. For all their differences though, these poetic renderings of human-animal encounters have a similar effect on us. They inspire wonder, prompting us to ask, as Bishop does,

Why, why do we feel
(we all feel) this sweet
sensation of joy?

As the holidays approach, and joy is trumpeted by carolers and Christmas cards, I hope you all find a quiet afternoon to enjoy "this sweet / sensation" of readerly joy—while wearing pajamas.

Carrie Dawson