

"Words' Worth" Poetry Readings

Poets at the Culture, Arts, and Parks Committee of the Seattle City Council.

Preservation by Kathleen Flenniken

Bobo awaits my third grade class
at the forgotten end of the museum. I explain
when they finish beating their chests

that Bobo was a famous gorilla I saw at the zoo
when I was seven, that here he looks false
because he's stuffed and mounted upright, like a man.

We take in his flared nostrils and hair, the virility
of his chocolate-colored chest. Everyone, even Dylan,
falls silent for a moment, long enough to remember

you left me four weeks ago yesterday,
a rubber band snap to my inner cranium
for the thousandth time today.

Bess and Tran point to photos of Bobo as a baby,
dressed in a nightgown, being fed a bottle. Bobo "smiling
at his birthday party. Happier days. I think irrelevantly

of the milk expiring in my refrigerator,
how attached I am to the date on the carton,
the day before the world went sour.

Even milk observes the rites of decomposition,
the holy rites that Bobo was denied.
Is that so wrong? Roy Rogers

stuffed and mounted Trigger, his companion.
Wasn't that sweet testament, if sad and strange?
Bobo, do you understand the impulse?

I gaze into your fake glass eyes but you decline
to answer. I'm talking to myself, your look implies.
We both stand awkwardly with nothing to say.

The kids are restless. They're talking about ice cream
and the bus outside. He was real, I remind them
but they're running up the hall.

The last time I saw him, he was alive.

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