

Stephen Cushman

Euclid's Cuckoo

I know every bird in the sky
(Psalm 50)

Out in the county's
never meant nothing
but copperheads crows
cattle coyotes.

Flashfloods and rainbows
blowdowns tornados
of mind spirit feeling
keep the week reeling.

Yesterday Sunday
identified finally:
thicket-hid relisher
of tent-worms invisible

haunter of dawn
spooking dusk too
cooing or hooting or
sort of like barking

a seal might do
in fog through a scarf.
Yellow-billed synonym
for most marbles lost,

named you at last.



Euclid Looks It Up

Better quit killing the cattle, Coyote,
or soon you'll hear a rabbit call,

your favorite dish, in nearby distress.
Or SOS from orphaned pups

screaming for rescue in distant dens.
Or no less perilous under Snow Moon

a whimper a whine a desperate howl
in heat unbearable looking to lock.

All of them fake. Some made by hand,
some by machine, each one comes

with rifle included, or else a shotgun
preferred for close range. Serves you right,

apex predator nuisance trickster
tricked in turn by your kind of con,

the phony tones, the vocals mimicked
when you and a mate imitate a pack;

serves you right, they'll say forgetting
prestigious meant deceptive once.



Euclid, Civilian, at Malvern Hill

Euclid, you landlubber, what do you know
 about Leviathan other than war
 of all against all, the state of nature
 according to Hobbes, ask any elm
 once growing here, Poindexter's farm
 or Methodist Parsonage, twin brick chimneys
 all that's left long after Crew House
 slave cabins vanished. Sorry: disease,
 Dutch as Melville's Ganesvoort granddad,
 wiped out the elms so there's no question
 his talking trees can answer:

We elms of Malvern Hill

Remember every thing.

Neither great poem nor a great insight
 of Hobbes about *the face of the earth*
 we'd know nothing of without social contract
 beech oak and poplar grew up despite.



Euclid Complicit

... why smartphones are running ...
(U.S. Geological Department)

Today of all days, one trillion six hundred
fifty nine billion three hundred million
seven hundred thousand since the first puff

on the face of the deep, and today has the cheek,
chutzpah, what have you, to show up like this
miscarried Monday a month

before spring, sleet-spoiled snow,
rain-rotten slush, mist, fog, and hint
of no cobalt blue, nothing exultant

in cobalt's credentials, not in the view
of underground goblin weather distemper
runny and wheezing *Cobalt, who cares*

*what fairer skies do, why envy anyone
living on messages sent and delivered
by couriers nourished on caviar ore*

mined in fine dust by child or slave?



Euclid in the Optative Postulates Optics on the Mighty Big Muddy

Let it be assumed first light flashing yellow-orange badges
near where Audubon's flatboat landed *passes through space of great*
extent

drifting downriver into the cormorants, the grackles and gulls
and "white-headed eagles," *are things upon which the vision has fallen*
but for some reason do not appear in *Birds of America* among other
blacks,

black tern yes, black guillemot too, even black warrior, so why
not a blackbird, unless here at Memphis in first light of daybreak
December the first, a Friday that year, he just plain missed
red-wing display in the thick of "purple finches, parakeets, teal,"
and things unseen which vision does not fall on, or maybe the blackbirds
were migrant in Mexico and the sea captain's bastard born of his
chambermaid

didn't catch up until volume five, female and male, she looking down
on him from above, painted from specimens purchased from others
back from the west and called "prairie starling" after the Chickasaw,
Choctaw, and Cherokee had passed this way also, another migration
with Sin-e-cha singing, "I have no more land, driven from home
up the red waters, let us die together and lie on the banks,"
nothing that is seen is seen at once entirely, in lieu of life eternal
leave us anachrony.

