

# Poetry

Lisa Mullenneaux

## WATER BABY

She is happiest in the big pool where  
subsurface  
she can see the whole cast headless  
oscillating  
in waves of bleached unnatural blue.  
Elephant  
in ballerina skirt who minces as she wades.  
Speedo man  
with hairy legs groping his rubber-capped wife as she scissors  
past him.  
A blind man's hands reading tiled walls like Braille  
until straphed  
by the water jet. Her grandmother's bulbous ass  
wedged  
in its pink inflated tube. Only the pump's low moan  
echoes  
when she dives to the pool floor for seed pods  
or lost sandals  
her hair unleashing a dark curtain around her. Then  
pale arms  
reaching for daylight, she corkscrews to the surface  
knowing  
she is young. Nothing can claim her.

## FEVER DREAM

He had cataloged a continent and now

shed the comfort of old intelligence to test

quadrants of longing            weights without measures—

the pleasures of bush foraging

musk of mating wildebeests.

An oiled rag wicks out the dark

a scythe extends the cutting arm

plowmen curse a gibbous moon.

He was learning all this,

malarial and fever-stoked,

when the green hills of Africa

swallowed him up.

FOLLY

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## ARS POETICA

Was it foxfire that let us tunnel in or did we drop  
through a sinkhole in porous rock, exposing  
a seam that showed us portents in glinting substrate?

Soon, cramped and gluttonous, we were hacking,  
grinding, sieving crude ore into granules, hewing  
palpable forms in cavernous night, where we could hear

nothing but the tap of metal on rock and see  
the mind's dross beside tailings of our words—  
chain-linked, prismatic.

Surfacing, shy as voles, we acquiesced  
to the dailiness of sun and clean socks.  
*Dark amid the blaze of noon, we blinked*

at a world too wearily fresh and sank  
into the folds of sleep, each in his cell,  
to prospect other quarries in blackdamp air.

**Lisa Mullenneaux's** poetry has appeared in *Global City Review* and *Forum Italica*. She works as an editor in Manhattan.

