

Title: “The Changeling of Chaplin, CT” and “Invasive Species” [poetry]

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Poetry

“The Changeling of Chaplin, CT” & “Invasive Species”

Aaron Pinnix

I spent fall of 2021 and spring of 2022 in a 200-year-old farmhouse in eastern Connecticut among 140 acres of mixed hardwood forest inhabited by bobcats, coyotes, foxes, flying squirrels, and occasionally a black bear. In addition to my animal neighbors, I was surrounded by the region’s cultures and crafts, with a historic textile industry carried on by local artisans. These experiences guided my poem “The Changeling of Chaplin, CT” as I felt the people and animals around me influence my own thinking and life. On the other hand, “Invasive Species” is very much a poem written about the pandemic and the possibility of infection atop infection, of alien invasion & unintended consequences.



The Changeling of Chaplin, CT

The witches of Eastern Connecticut spin thread,
weave fabric, work at looms, blow glass, make jewelry,
bend copper, make wooden bowls, sculpt magic out of raw
materials like hair, bone, and wood.

Out of such material incantations this world, this glade,
the last green valley, this story arrives...

Nocturnal flying squirrels rustle among leaves and peering
through branches see a figure among foxfire fungi’s
bioluminescent green glow performing ablutions, whispering
owl screech, coyote howl, sounds of creeping creatures,
sounds of caught prey as the fish-eyed Moon lies
everywhere upon the land.

Into this night I wander, my boots sucking into moss
 when over the next hillock I see zigzag figures
intoning ancient sounds, rendering invocations
and in their midst an earthen prolapse
growing first into floral bud
 before bursting open

and within I perceive myself
 reflected, my own tiny movements,
eyes glowing as if lit by two coals
and my breath a record scratch upon the air.
Coming closer, two eyes
 mirroring my eyes: the other other

and in little small motions, that segue there!
the material incantation takes over, accumulating
throughout this soggy muck. Into my sedimentation:
 flailing change

as the Moon projects fish-eyed upon the whole bosky
environ,
 on glowworm chemistry
 & tree frog chorus.

In the morning I find a skin, shed and deposited
on the doorstep.

These bowels, this combustible brain,
 altered, remade,
shadow mice that dart and cleave
 through my interregnum system,
an unctuous organizing and reorganizing,
the myelin sheath pulled back, the electrical stimulus
 writhing
while from the fissures—eyes peer forth.

Invasive Species

After the news broke,
the now familiar images of grainy celestial bodies
 moving past Saturn,
I spent the summer in melancholia, wondering about
rebellion & faith, reading Ashbery in the back garden,
 considering what mixed drink to make next.

One feels it most sharply in morning mist stretched taut
between blinks and the last shotput electric light,
 while nearby the world burns, burns.

We all drink too much. My dreams are filled with visions of
maps and back roads, winding tunnels of escape. All my
glass jar homunculi get squirrely, they spit twist and snarl,
while sirens on the streets effectively box us in.

A series of garden parties. Firing for effect,
our cannonballs splash uselessly against pool walls.

 First the alates arrive as winged representatives.
 Then vesicle-encrusted larva rain down in the night.
 Spiral spores fall into the Earth and by morning
 the drones gnash up from the dirt
 like shark fetuses eating each other in the womb.
 Reverberant waves of loneliness
 emit out our apartment windows.

Among abandoned strip malls and gas stations,
derelict and fecund like ancient monuments
in the afternoon's heavy humidity,
 unknown spores are landing
 and opening across your skin.

Your face, your perceptions, your appetites, your soul
are now nourished anew, embroidered now by
 intergalactic cordyceps,
by gorgeous ancient alien glitter
 and plumage gown.

Being witness to invasive species, to hosts, parasites,
and the meandering touch of ecological devastation,

 unintentionally
you turn your mycological face
and struggle toward the light.

Aaron Pinnix is a Postdoctoral Researcher in American Studies at the University of Konstanz in Germany. Recent publications include articles in *JCMS: Journal of Cinema and Media Studies*, *Atlantic Studies*, *Shima*, and forthcoming in *The Routledge Companion to Eco-poetics*. His research is on ocean-focused poetry that conjoins ecological and social justice, and he is currently working on a monograph, *Poetry of the Submerged Anthropocene*, that examines how contemporary poetry addresses humanity's effects on underwater life.