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### Comments by Cal Bedient on poems by Patricia Goedicke

Patricia Goedicke

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I like the kelp-dance-and-sway of this version;  
it feels less laid-down, like the other one,  
and more line-alive and in process. But

#### IDEAS

minus "of meaning" and "chaotic / teeming currents"

The thin bars of the traps we let down  
to catch the gossiping lobsters of meaning, mere  
table talk or the deep, ongoing  
history of the sea's long standing  
affair with earth and where we stand on it  
and how, each clever cat's cradle  
we weave for ourselves keeps shuddering  
at every passing fin, each explanation  
we invent shines fitfully  
but proudly against the chaotic  
teeming currents it lives in.

And wants to make love to,  
illuminate even those dark  
seething carpets of other, wilder  
hungrier scholars that seem almost  
to swallow us. In rippling schools. Masses  
of small bottom fish, corpuscles  
like fire leaping across chasms  
or slower, oozing into thick  
crusted layers. The seep of cells  
worm-like, secretly dividing  
and then multiplying into live  
clumped coral. Buzzing. With eager  
electric hooks, pronged feet, tiny  
red starfish hanging all over

the eyehole we peer through, what  
ceaseless activity, would they tear us  
apart?  
No, they are too blind,  
too random for that. But both kinds  
of colonists urgently need  
to cuddle, make up to each other  
now. Because every answer  
we get comes caked with the prickly  
slime of barnacles, the rickety  
cages we erect against sharks  
and other predators are frail  
ghost crabs. See where their near see-through  
slats sway in the hissing crackle  
of the cold soup that created them.



This version also to Marlon

PATRICIA GOEDICKE

This poem does what I least like in your work--it slides or jumps from figure to figure without any care for coherency. Okay, a "montage" poetics has laws of its own, but there's a difference, however fine, between dispatching an image and abandoning it too soon for something different.

Each day the body puts on its pounds of tar.  
Dark, viscous. Who can climb out of it?

One foot at a time. Lift. Fall back. Lift.

It is like dragging an iron bedstead behind you all the way down to breakfast.

Try to shrug one shoulder without feeling it in the other.

Ponderous food particles dissolve like rotten fruit, into islands of wet mulch.

The cargo in the hold shifts ominously, the hull whistles and creaks.

Slow. Wallowing around in there with a few rubbery bones and the brown spongy clumps of the pancreas, liver, etc.

Friends tug at the bars, make faces at you to come out.

But the bucket you live in is an anchor loaded with damp stones, the boat will not move without it.

Heavy chemicals pour, from one chamber to another.

And you're stuck in them like a shoe; you'll never make it to the bridge.

How keep the head above waterline?

And the others trapped in their bunks all around you, Help, Help.

These opening lines are odd and fresh, but there's a slight hesitation involved: climb out of the body (as tar), or get the body to climb out of the tar? I can do this-- it's not a real challenge and the point of it is ambiguous, anyway

buckets aren't chambered chemicals under a water? you don't need a bridge if you not all around you if you're in a bucket/anchor.

This is chaos for the reader's would-be-cooperative imagination!

(stanza break)



Peek your nose out the top                    the top of bucket? anchor? boat?  
and dance with the Big Dipper you can't.                    tar pile?

The bowels won't let you, the hormones handcuff you  
to whatever weather they want.

One afternoon when your ears are ringing  
in solitary

let go. Drop everything. Descend

Arresting and beautiful from  
here on down ...

like a diver into the vast  
rustling folds of the ocean

and just hang there. Silent  
as a pearl in an oyster but weightless.

revolving like a feather on its stem  
or a thought:

it is like being a thought.