

Harpur Palate: a Literary Journal

Volume 11 | Issue 1

Article 52

June 2011

Men

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Recommended Citation

Munde, Christopher (2011) "Men," *Harpur Palate: a Literary Journal*: Vol. 11: Iss. 1, Article 52.
Available at: <https://orb.binghamton.edu/harpurpalate/vol11/iss1/52>

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Munde: Men

MEN

CHRISTOPHER MUNDE

That precipitous fall from symbol to the world could kill a man, or the thing
half-transformed to man on the way down.

The Leeds family learned this; their thirteenth child has haunted the Pine
Barrens for decades,
sometimes as a horse-headed man with wings, others as a hoofed lizard,
never as a centaur. Painful
to admit, but it does matter which end's human.

*Regarding the Pineys, our pack leader told his busload of scouts,
With several generations of inbreeding and no civilized contacts, if you see
one, you'll know—talking real horror.*

Such is deformity, and with the lack of shapeliness comes the misshaping of
all surrounding life: Absence: A wall;

Paved ground: A wall; the razored
gloaming of the evergreens: A shifting, roiling roof. God,

that slope. I dragged a canoe up that pale, vertical sand hill in the Barrens
and could not find sky through all the green, strain
of the dragging barely registering on my rise toward the darkness, the Devil
that wasn't there,

(So what if it wasn't) raising me, nonetheless, to his jade maw.

And then the latest rash of Jersey Devil sightings were all proven hoaxes:
Seems no one questioned its existence until they really started seeing it.
All of the prints were left by wooden hooves, or feet, or talons and so no

in fear, only threats of horror (so what if it wasn't shape), and thus,

a kind of fall:

Not a man's weeping face—whatever line divides men from things he won't
cross before the needle-cloaked earth—

he shrouds himself in receding wings, or clasps his face in his paws, or digs
talons into horse hide, then

lizard skin, into Devil, then nothing as the forest floor comes close.

He glimpses something move off along the beach, something he should
have become,

some solid, constant man: one-who-does-not-drag-a-canoe.

But here the ground accepts another one, and his last thought stains
this place, retains the same

misshape: *If only*

I'd killed someone.