

Winning Poems in 2021 CFCP, Inc., Annual Contest

3. Any Subject, Any Style, Second Place

The Language of Mars

Say you're in a cavernous room of rainbows
with the perfume of every kind of flower
swans swimming in a blue grotto
you step up to an enormous black door
peer through a keyhole to see
gray wheels in red light spinning slowly

Once the words come to you
how long before they dwindle
before you know you've said
everything that can be said
about that door and what lies behind it?

Verbal beings we speak of literal and imaginary worlds
using words rooted in the natural codices of the earth
few of our symbols of meaning transpose to Mars
all of those green and blue phonemes sparking inside our
language of forests meadows and rivers and even the
steel and neon pentameters of cities
you can just throw them all away
human tongues on Mars fade into monotones

The keyhole reveals scarps craters and dunes
there you have it sand freeze what else can
one say? We have left behind entire species and
families of words the lexicons of Whitman
Dickenson and Muir are hushed into silence

earthlings write and speak with the full spectrum
of complex glories which is their home on Mars
a kind of Neanderthal grunt
3 billion years ago we may have had Martian poets
but not any more that language has been lost
what we see is a dumb planet that dreams the kind
of world we now have a world in need of polyglot
tongues to sing it properly and beautifully

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