

Failed Starts

Every summer I root for all those little maple trees
growing in the gutter of my front roof wishing
them well though I know they are doomed,
And every summer I vow to clean out the many years
of accumulated leaves that now provide such
hopeful soil for the maple seeds
But after the little trees die from the many inadequacies
of their tiny habitat I forget about them and their soil.
So much of creation seems mass produced,
Like the baby chicks that are processed on assembly
lines for human consumption, or like rabbits that
are so optimally constructed to serve the needs
of a diversity of predators.
So useful they are that one almost expects God to patent them.
Rabbits striving to escape their meaning in the great
hierarchy of eating stand utterly still as their
first defense in the face of danger,
Like frozen dinners.
God is infinitely careless with His sperm
I so much wanted to stand face to face with this
mystery of things that I took matters into my
own hands after a manner of speaking and
produced a sample.
Putting them on a slide I studied them 400 times enlarged
and sure enough they were just like tadpoles.
So many there were and so infused with the energy
of an absurd hope,
I felt pity for them as I did for the rabbits and chicks
and the little trees and for real tadpoles too
for that matter who are not doing so well these days,
And perhaps this Earth whose untimely demise we
are already grieving is but one sperm among billions
in our galaxy alone though that does seem a waste.
And I felt admiration too.
But even should they have seen the Great Eye peering
down from the sky and prayed to me what
could I have done?
I did not know that some would be so much bigger than others.
Do the smaller ones stand a chance?
And were I a race horse of a sperm faster than all the others,

A great Seabiscuit in this teaspoon world able to gallop in
my wiggly sort of way to the finish line ahead
of all the others to find waiting for me there
a shapely egg anxious to enfold me in her
semi-permeable embrace,

Would I have wanted to accept her invitation and become
like that one seed in a million or billion that
becomes a maple tree,

Leaving all my peers to starve

On the unyielding ground,

Or rotting in the gutters?

Would I share the huge indifference of the Creator

For all His billions of failed starts?

At some point I must have said,

why yes.

Yes.

Of course.