

## ANIMALS IN THE NEWS

First it was Montecore, the Siberian Tiger  
    who, as Roy the Magician was spangling  
and prestidigitating all over the Las Vegas Mirage,  
    took—Da DA!—Roy's head in his mouth as a child

takes a chocolate bunny, and dragged him off  
    the stage into retirement and intensive care.  
Next, it was the lion some lunatic raised  
    in his Manhattan flat, and planned to use in re-

creating Eden until, with one swipe of its paw,  
    the beast unzipped his thigh from hip to knee.  
A day later, as my kids (safe in our house  
    where forest used to grow) watched TV shows

starring benevolent dragons and a bison wise  
    as Socrates, I read about a man from Malibu  
who lived with Alaskan grizzlies, wrote books  
    and sold videos about his furry bros, and even

brought a woman-friend to live with them.  
    But when the bush pilot came to fly them home,  
all he found were bloody chunks. And when two bears  
    declined to let three forest rangers commandeer

what they had hunted fair and square, the rangers shot  
    the bears: not unlike the fate of Brad and Daisy Tang  
when they balked at letting Crips hijack their car,  
    which had stopped, like a grazing herbivore,

on the very spot where, eons before, an allosaurus  
    killed a parasaurolophus whose bones would  
have been found if, instead of blowing herself up  
    in a bus-full of kids fresh from *Winnie the Pooh*

in Hebrew, a young Palestinian who, at one time, hoped  
    to be a paleontologist, had come to school in the U.S.,  
torn up the concrete where 56th meets Bellevue Boulevard,  
    and dug.

## BUILDING A TURTLE

The fiberglass that veterinarians use to patch  
real turtles hit by cars, dropped  
off cliffs, or cracked by hammer-swinging boys,  
molds into a strong shell. With enough skill,

you can carve a shell from wood, or sculpt one  
out of stone. Papier-mâché will spare the turtle  
heavy lifting, but dissolves in rain.

Paint the shell as you see fit. Incise it

with stars, diamonds, jailhouse tattoos . . .

it's *your* turtle. Use braided wire, jointed  
dowels, or rubber for the legs and tail. Glued-on  
sunflower seeds make first-rate scales;

or try sequins, for a country-western feel.

Goose-neck-lamp metal works for turtles, too.

The tube holds batteries to light the eyes—

brown for female, orange for male. The head

can be wood, metal, or plastic, as long

as the beak takes an edge, and the jaw moves.

Screw or super-glue the head into the neck.

(A pink eraser-slice makes a fine tongue.)

Fill the shell with something light—crumpled

newsprint, spun fiberglass—held in by soft  
leather or plastic that mimics wrinkled skin.

Instilling life is trickier. Turtles struck

by lightning may “go Frankenstein.”

Jesus succeeded by commanding, “Crawl!”

(Try it yourself. You never know . . .)

Your best bet is: submerge your turtle

in water spiked with the chemicals

that sashed in ancient seas. Cover with a dome  
that lets in sun, cosmic rays, and the infrequent  
meteor. Wait in a comfortable spot.

## GRATITUDE FOR DARK ENERGY

Why did I love my baseball glove  
the first time I slid it on: the soft cow-hide;  
the thong that joined the fingers in a team;  
the pocket, baited with enough Neatsfoot oil  
to catch the most skittish hardball?

Why, when I saw my bobber's red nipple  
yanked under Gull Lake's scummy  
green, and lifting my cane-pole,  
felt the bluegill battling to swim away,  
did I want to feel the same thing every day?

Why, way back in first grade, did Sandi  
Sanders make my heart thunder  
like rows of tympani, while Mary  
Mason—just as blonde, pony-tailed,  
and giggling—caused barely a thud?

Now that we know our dreams aren't  
sent by deities—now that we can chart  
the paths of galaxies, and calculate  
a star's weight, chemistry, and the power  
in its vast-but-not-infinite light—

thanks be to God-who-isn't-there  
for dark energy that commands  
the cosmos, "Expand endlessly,"  
and leaves us hope for things we'll never  
understand.