

If the occidental
prototype
is Dürer's little
Indian,
sheathed as if
by a Renaissance
armourer (you
can all but see
the rivets
on the plates) then
we are at a multiple
loss. How can we
see anything so
innocent ever
again? We rue
extinction
for its abrupt
and final un-
spooling of DNA,
but there's a kind
of shunt in
curiosity too:
never again

will we see it
anew. It will go
into the twilight
of curiosities,
the gloom where
dodo and auk
moult to a dust.
Dust to dust.
Yet remember
crossing to Paterson
on the public road
and suddenly on
a mother and infant
in the scurf scrub-
land. Everyone
dotes on the obvious
horn, but it is
so plainly antic
phallic. Recall
instead how
bandy-legged
they are, and their
differentially

evolved lips;
and there, in that
degraded thicket
under the low
clout of the sky
out east, how
the infant orbited
its massive maternity.

You were there
with me then,
and now that's
extinct, yet
I'm writing you
this drizzle of words,
pepper-milled
horn of compact
hair. I think lust
drove us forward
before those
all-but-last
rhinoceros
turned for the
occluding

xeric thicket, there
to become
the slenderest
hope of something
enduring.
Monumental,
let's say, got up
on the fifth
day, worked over
by Dürer and Kipling:
after all
deserving their cud,
milk, shadow
and respite. To you
I send this
fond glance
in the rear-view
as we go forward
into the general
catastrophe.

Peter Anderson



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