

This Stingray Makes Me Think of God

for Charlotte the Stingray, d. 7/1/24, Hendersonville, NC

BEN GRAHAM

From the measured, we marvel
 this side of aquarium glass
 or luminant silica sand
 or stained frescoes
Inexplicable urges to tap

Important, now
To give this becoming a name
 Species uniting?
 A virgin birth?
 Curated conspiracy?

We await the procession
of those designated to ink
this shoreline search for truth
with a capital t, smudged
by damp saltwater breeze

Watching, expectant
We long for depth, forever at risk
 of only ticketed curiosity
 or transactional genuflect
Barefoot pilgrimages, we make for this

While our own unpinnable mysteries
float quietly in a tank
Ocean proxies built
perhaps good enough
to see in, out
Half (t)here, under vaulted arches
 built to cradle
 intertidal breaths

This stingray's procession ends
at the limit of corporeal reason,
as evening Blue Ridge shadows point
quietly toward the Grand Strand

Can genes as rare as hers
or yours
or mine
join us in our wonder?
Vast, eternal, and without shoes?

Strange to those beyond the pane
loud, in only sweat-damp cotton
terrestrial heads with salty ideas,
born of longing

Stranger still, the catlike wonder
deciding what's to be done
about the grace
inside of fishbowls

I decide to abandon the shift key, finally
for a beachcomber's truth:
We are simple beyond comprehension,
invited to marvel
as means of discovery
things floating quietly
within the measureless sea