

Cultural Daily

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Martin Ott: Two Poems

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Martin Ott mostly recently published *Spectrum* (C&R Press, 2016). He is the author of seven books and won the De Novo and Sandeen prizes for his first two poetry collections. His work has appeared in more than two hundred magazines and a dozen anthologies.

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Sharks vs. Selfies

This grudge match is eons in the making, old world leviathan head to head with new world myopia. Which has caused more destruction? *When we met you did not like me although you stared at the V on my neck and shoulders.* A tourist tumbles down the steps of the Taj Mahal. A weekend body boarder gets shredded abs in Redondo. A woman is electrocuted when slipping off a train in Iasi. A man diving for scallops off Tasmania disappears in front of his daughter. *You worry I will choose my children over you at every opportunity.* Do you know their weak spots? Smart phone dunked in dirty martinis. Fingers gouging gill openings. iPhones respect hands curved in evolutionary necessity. *Our only wedding photo was a selfie in East LA outside a sign for Pollos Vivos.* Sharks respect size and power. Which one will survive the fall, mist rising from scrap metal, bleached bones in tidal basins, the stunned cry off a bridge into the depths? Fear rattles like a shark teeth on an old fisherman, a ringtone for the earth. The blink of an eye. *The brink of love.*

Planet Nine

for David Bowie

Absence does not make the heart grow, not in this universal morass where even light was seen apparently sneaking out of a black hole. A scientist examines objects in the outer satellites of the sun and tells us there is a missing planet to replace the one that got relegated to Hades, the ripple in our textbooks, each page torn and folded to explain sorrow and traveling great distances. We know this heavenly body exists because of the warping around it, nieces and nephews, grandfather's twin in a crash landing or the sibling absorbed, the angry giant who spits moons into the Kaiper belt, the seasons our families spin out of control. We know this object is hiding, the reason for books about

yoga and gods, string theory and puppet regimes, aliens in ancient ice caverns and zombies learning to dance a devastating rhumba. When two objects collide sometimes stardust blinds you on the night you first said *I love you* or else a child feels the tug of a lost parent and knows.

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