

DEBORAH SOMMERER

Trapped

"the green and golden meadow of pantheism beetles dreadfully over the abyss of moral nullity."

—Thomas MacFarland

Wretched rat,
the enmity between man and serpent
is ancient myth,
but you, squeaking and gibbering,
hurling yourself against the bars
of my humane squirrel cage,
you make real the horror stories :
babies eaten in their carriages,
pits and pendulums, the plague.
For you I would gladly
pay the piper.

Instead, my good husband,
knowing me averse to poison,
offers to drown you. It's your fault
entirely, that you are not one,
but many,
invading this city.
Your beady-eyed dark face, the reverse
of a cheerfully correct neighbor,
busily composting your dinner and your
dwelling,
for her, tomorrow, I'm going gunning.

Today, however, your cage
will be lowered
into a garbage can of icy water,
and you, suddenly silent,
swimming upwards against
the bars for I don't know how long.

An ugly curiosity draws me
to the window, to spy,
as you, of all things, begin to tidy up.
I watch you pull down your left ear

for a good scrubbing, then the right,
whiskers, flank, fur above the nose.

My husband, not an unreasonable man,
finds my wish to borrow a car
and drive you out of the city
unreasonable.

And so you've become my rat,
rattling in the trunk, vile pink hands
wrapped around cage bars,
yellow teeth endlessly gnawing.

In spite of my advantage in size,
my boots and gloves,
the technological superiority of my cage,
my terror matches yours,
as I spring you at the cliff's brink
watch you flash through January leaves
who shudder at your passage : rat.

*Deborah Sommerer is a resident of Toronto and has studied
and taught in the Department of English at the University
of Toronto.*