Zoological Garden (first published in chapbook "Migrations")

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Zoological Garden

In the center of the garden on her nest
a swan presses her beak against her breast,
radiant in the sun. She combs herself,
draws her beak back and forth.

No wonder Zeus took a swan's shape to seduce a woman.
("Nesting swans can be aggressive," says the sign.)

The garden encircles her--fowl yard, fountains, nasturtium beds,
gazelles in a meadow, bison, bear, sleeping leopards.

We think it our task to name them,
bring them together and arrange them,
for the mind always describes itself, where it came from,
where it goes. We think the gazelles will dream

of African plains, or the bison, remembering prairies,
will tear down the fence, or the pelicans fly to cold skies.

Yet here they are. They feed and sleep as we dream
and imagine our end. The swan

merely grooms herself, but we see her, part bird, part sun,
and carry home with us a vision

of snow and fire.