

The New Criterion

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Bank voles at Trinity College, Dublin

by William Logan

At first the damp leaves
rustled with the thought
of unharvested sheaves
and undergrads untaught,

the myrtle greens, the browns
of soggy paper bags
or satin May Ball gowns
lacking designer tags.

Startled like a fear,
the stubby, red-haired mouse
showed its tufted rear
above a weed-choked house,

taking a nervous pause
beneath the shadowy leaf,
unworried by the cause
of rage, despair, or grief,

or sins that separate
man from a mouse so wary,
our rough but certain fate
in Eden's bestiary.

Through the star-crossed town
each boy with pink champagne
escorted a brilliant gown
down a college lane.

Love places us in a line
stretching back to the fish
that left the womb's warm brine
for the land's gibberish,

but no man comprehends
the reason of his birth,
or that he'll lie in the end
beneath the weedy earth,

where the common vole,
a sacrificial pawn,
intends to be small but whole
some generations on.

William Logan's latest collection of criticism, *Broken Ground: Poetry and the Demon of History*, was published in spring 2021 by Columbia University Press.

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