

2021

Who Cometh Here?

Mary Oliver

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Recommended Citation

Oliver, Mary (2021) "Who Cometh Here?," *Appalachia*: Vol. 67 : No. 1 , Article 24.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.dartmouth.edu/appalachia/vol67/iss1/24>

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Who Cometh Here?

Years after I wrote a joke poem about a black bear being sighted in our neighboring town, Truro, one adventurer did actually come, crossing Massachusetts, swimming the channel, striding the length of the Cape to the end of it. One can imagine him staring out at the water—waves to the coast of Portugal—before he sighed and turned back.

He did no harm, was seen practically rubbing up against the Provincetown Town Hall, striding the edge of Route 6 and finally (who can blame him?) invading a beehive in the town of Wellfleet. There he was captured, tranquilized, tagged and trucked back to where, by the Rangers' best guess, he had begun his journey.

Most residents on the Cape were relieved. But a few, myself among them, had other thoughts.

The truth is, he was probably looking for a partner, and he certainly wasn't the first of our sort—though possibly the first of his—to visit Provincetown for the same purpose. In any case, he didn't come to stir up the government, or open another café or heaven forbid a fast food restaurant, or mouth off opinions about gay, anti-gay, or what he thought of the artists, or write endless complaining letters to the town paper.

Yes, I suppose he must have poached a few fish. But on the other hand think what a valuable resident he might have become, had he been willing to join in our charitable events (A hundred dollars for a chance to go dancing with Provincetown's very own bear!). Also, with his preference for camping out he certainly wouldn't have been one of those holiday weekend renters who leave behind stuffed toilets and other destructions.

Dear Bear, it's no use, the world is like that. So stay where you are, and live long. Someday maybe we'll wise up and remember what you were: hopeless ambassador of a world that returns now only in poets' dreams.

Mary Oliver

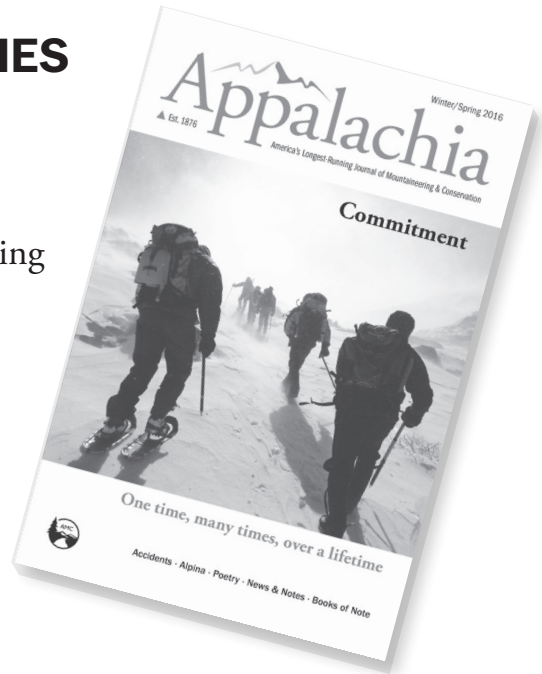
MARY OLIVER has published more than a dozen volumes of poetry, as well as works of imaginative prose and poetry instruction. *A Thousand Mornings* (Penguin) was published in October 2012. *Dog Songs* (Penguin Press HC) appeared in October 2013. Her most recent collection, *Blue Horses* (Penguin Press HC), was released in October 2014. Oliver lived for many years in Provincetown, Massachusetts, on Cape Cod.

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