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PARKS STEWARDSHIP FORUM

Humanizing the Seas

A Case for Integrating the Arts and Humanities
into *Ocean Literacy and Stewardship*

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Plastic Catch • Susan Schultz
porcelain and wood sculpture



VERSE IN PLACE

JOHN FREEMAN

The Gargantuan Arm

Let us remember liberty was not popular,
seven years it took Laboulaye to convince
Bartholdi a gigantic statue was
what New York Harbor needed. Ten
years later the Frenchman
arrived in Philadelphia with her gargantuan arm.
Thirty feet high, nearly two tons of torch.
Displayed at the peak of America's backward
slide into Emancipation, it looks now
like a statue sunk in sand. So
were its finances. The same month
Jo Reed was dragged from
his cell in Nashville, Tennessee, and
hung from a suspension bridge by
an angry mob. "Hardly had Reed
been lodged in jail than the subject
of lynching him had become general
conversation," the *Memphis Daily
Appeal* reported.

Their fund-raising tour in Philadelphia
complete, Bartholdi and crew dismantled
the appendage, packed it into
crates, and loaded her on a train to New York City.
For five years the arm sat in Madison Square Park
as *Harper's* railed against Americans
having to pay for its pedestal. Raising pennies.
Coins. You could climb up inside of Liberty, it
was grand, a view. But the person taking
your ticket couldn't. People loved it. Workers
on the project back in France got married,
had children, died. Kipling came
to Paris in 1878 when Bartholdi showed
the head and was told he'd peered
through the eyes of Liberty herself. That
same month Michael Green was dragged
from his cell in Upper Marlboro, Maryland,
a noose thrown round his neck, and his
body raised fifteen feet from the ground.
Left there until the following morning.



VERSE IN PLACE

In May of 1884, an American
businessman in Paris hosted an opulent
banquet in Bartholdi's honor, all of Parisian
society there in clothes pressed
and washed by others. Black servants
moving through the room swiftly.
Did any of the guests regard the arms
that swept over their heads to whisk
away the china and cutlery
before a new course arrived? Did they
marvel at the strength of a human-sized
arm that can carry a tray weighing thirty or
forty pounds and remain unseen?
Not spill a drop of wine or sweat.
And did any of the men waiting that
night pause for a cigarette, or
stand outside looking in at the glass
banquet hall, with its crystal
chandelier and its small-scale
model of Liberty, and know it
was not for him?

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JOHN FREEMAN is the editor of *Freeman's*, a literary annual which features new writing by Louise Erdrich, Olga Tokarczuk, Robin Coste Lewis and Haruki Murakami, among others. He has written three books of nonfiction, *The Tyranny of Email*, *How to Read a Novelist*, and *Dictionary of the Undoing*, as well as two collections of poems, *Maps* and *The Park*, both published by Copper Canyon. A child of California public schools, he lives today in New York City, where he is artist-in-residence at NYU and executive editor of The Literary Hub. Between 2014 and 2020, he edited a series of anthologies on inequality, concluding this year *Tales of Two Planets*, which focuses on the collision of the climate crisis and global inequality. Freeman's work has been translated into more than 20 languages.

