

the blue cactus of Bahia

Melocactus azureus

once at the edge of a Brazilian farm  
in the dry county of Morro do Chapéu I found them  
we cornered the owner's permission to cross his land  
his invitation to a frothy *café com leite*  
then to walk quietly past his black and white milk goats  
who paraded fat and content with spring grass  
but the field of thorn bushes and cactus with oval pads  
augured a xeric season

we found the prickly balls by the dozen  
above the rockbanded river  
blue melons of untossed grenades  
exploding in rows of spines  
ensconced on the sun-facing ledges  
we marveled at these rare ornaments  
whose cloudy blue skin mirrored sky  
getting down on all fours  
we took photos composed of shadows and stones

I lingered belly down on the bright rock outcropping  
a lizard like a crusty *calango* taking in the heat  
knowing what discoveries a man makes  
when he travels across the globe  
how he wanders in awe around them  
how he wants to claim them and name them  
a rock ledge with cacti and a field of goats  
if only for his remembrances

by Nels Christianson