

POEMS

1973

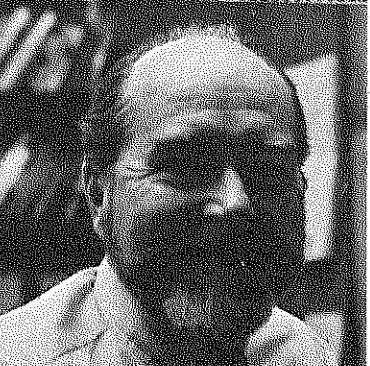
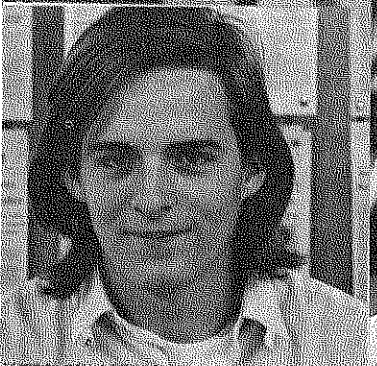
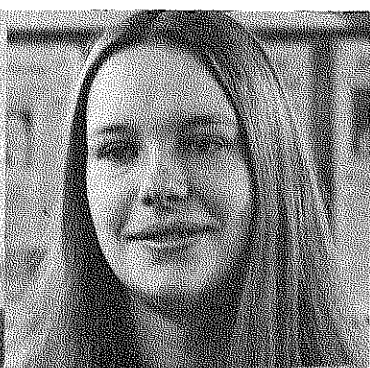
Hints at What

It Must Be



PEGASUS

Vol.V., No.2



Photos by Mike Howard

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THE RIGGER

A church cut a shadow from
the sun and stretched its shade upon
a mound bearing a crowd. They'd come
at noon and now they cowed in the shade.
A cross--massive and marble--lay
face down on the earth before
the mute masses. Then a machine
with hot pistons erupting churned
its linked-steel webs in behemoth prints
up to the church--its iron neck
craned high above the crowd. A sweat
oiled man leaped on the cross and lashed
a rope around its arm. A check
tug on the loop, his body set,
he shook his fist to the sky. A flash
of steel--the dropping hook--awed
the crowd, but hands, job thick and tough
tore the steel from its straight descent.
Cinching the line, he stayed the crowd
whose outstretched arms stubbornly sought
a sanctifying touch of the cross.
Then up it groaned; the rigger clung
to the swaying mass of stone. He wiped
his sweating face and grinned. The boss
of all the riggers roared: 'Come down,
you fool!' He flayed his arms and cursed
about incautious men. The town
followed the cross up to the rock
facade, where with a gambler's pride
the rigger, clutching Christ, thrust down
a shaft of steel into the chock
that held aloft the crucified.
He looked down, and he cried: 'It's done!'
The crowd with hands outspread against
the dying sun thundered their praise.

CALL ME ISHMAEL, STILL

Your white inscrutability
Still shoulders waves of a fathomed sea

And churns through plankton wandering with
The current winds. You've burned your myth
Into the eyes of men who see,
Lashed to your side, the shoaled Parsee.

Ormazd's apostle-warrior, roped
For sacrifice, fattened by seas,
Rides ubiquity's altar. Yet,
He could be but a deacon set
Beneath the high priest's chair. Degrees
Of shadowed greatness sharply sloped

From Ahab--Vulcan-Vicar, Scarred
Blasphemer--like the mainmast shade
Cutting athwart the whale-watched ship.
A Madness maddened bound to Pip,
The luckless child that visions made
Mad. In his cabin Ahab starred

His map--plotting his latitude
Of hot, hempen death to the sea,
Boiling with wounded malice. Down
Swirled his microcosm to drown
In white whelmings. Down in the sea
Swirled the fermenting mind which brewed

Laments for cautious men. But there
Loomed a pagan coffin for me.
Devil or God, Moby Dick
I wonder whether tongues made thick
With salt and sand can now agree?
Are ocean-jellied eyes aware?

'By rushing to a howling sea
The independence of the soul
Is won--shoreless I'll die!' I said,
Once. Now surviving has its dread.
No longer can the sea console.
Rachael alone still weeps for me.

AMERICAN GOTHIC

Two eggs up
on a chipped china plate
served by you
with your rude robe agape--
breakfast rite
for

Icon and Knight.
You and I
with elbow to thigh
framed by time
as we wait, well aware
eggs grow cold
in this dumb, dead affair.

LOUISE EHRLICH

WITH THE DESOLATE EMPTINESS OF THE SHORE

With the desolate emptiness of the shore
when winter wind blows,
my soul echoes.
I am the sand,
a million pieces
beaten by the waves as one.

MIKE WELCH

WOLFPACK

down down the snows surround
pawprints intersecting fast
to fade a shiver bending howl
wavering places the wolfpack passed

THE BORDERLINE

Haphazard, I wandered on
past the last town
Turned left came to the edge
Custom, man's freeze dried eyes
singd my eyebrows

heard them hiss
I had to glare at the man
And he checked my things
my suitcase and rings
My souvenir lamppost, my lilac shroud of sighs
My yantras strewn about, garnered to his eye
I cleared my throat
My flying saucer eyes my contraband mind
I went across the border

VINCENT RAIMONDO

PORTRAIT OF AN OLD ITALIAN

Angelo
sits in his chair by the window
watching the streams of light from the passing cars
below.

He sits back and smiles,
and lights his deNobli cigar,
and sips a glass of wine.

His nephew, Anthony, brought him a bottle last week.
'Ahhh, the boy makes a good glass of wine,
and I thank God that I still have the tongue
to taste it with.

And I am glad, and I thank God that I still
have the eyes in my head to see it.

And I am happy, and I thank God that I still
have my nose, as wrinkled and as red
as it may be,
to smell its tender, sweet fragrance.

And I thank God that I still am here today
to appreciate the pleasures of my humble
and withered life.

Tomorrow I may be as dead as Dante, and in the same place.

Angelo sits in his chair by the window
sits in his chair by the window
avoiding his thoughts of death,
and hoping
they can not swim.

He sits back and smiles,
and reaches for the book of matches on the window sill.

His fingers, deformed and stiff with age,
find it difficult to light the match.

One stick falls into the cuff of his trousers.
One stick splinters and falls on the floor.
One stick sparks and shows a full flame.

He smiles.

Angelo
reaches for the bell-shaped chianti bottle beside him on the floor,
and pours himself another glass.
With both hands wrapped around the glass, trembling,
he slowly brings it to his lips.

His eyes close slowly,
and his tongue mops up the wine that spills on his chin.

'I thank God for letting my
stomach be as strong as an iron furnace.

I thank God for letting my mind stay
clear and sharp in my eighty-eight years.

Angelo
rises from his chair and walks
the few steps to his bedroom.
Anthony's wine has made him a little drunk.
He laughs.

'Angelo, Angelo Piazza, you know
something, you are never
going to die, you will live forever.'

He says these words each night
before he goes to sleep.

THOM HARTMAN

COME TO ME IN DARKNESS

Come to me in Darkness
And I shall be content
To make love to you
A sweet song of grace
Lover of the loveless
I've seen you through many mists
Smiling with your heart
Dreamlike stepping into my lair
Welcoming submission to passions
Your flower blooms
For only mine own crying laugh to see
You have opened my heart
With your smile
Lover stay by me, though I grow
Senseless in dreams that are true
For you are my Merlin, my bewitcher
Love me as I reflect your beauty
Many times I have watched in wonderment
As you have changed the hues
And shades of your loveliness
Though each time I have known you more
My soul cries for you
O Love, you'll be mine always
For I have glimpsed the eyesight of Heaven

My love is a lady
for many reasons
My love is a lady
For she is loved.

ALF SVENDSEN

WOODSTOCK

Who is the nature child,
Is it I or is it you
That litters the woods with tin
Inserting metal penises,
While playing tunes on pennywhistles?

THE HUNTER

And you are the one
who comes on
like a thundering noise
that disturbs peace
and scares me
like a lightning streak
across the sky.
And how I need some air
some pleasant, cool air.
If you often wonder
why
I don't trust
your questions or replies,
it's because
I'm feeling paranoid
and insecure
like some long dead
king's jewels
in a spotlight corner
of some philanthropic,
historic museum.
And if you should ask
why
I'll tell you
that the night animal
is shocked and dazed
in a petrified way
by your fox chase horn
or your headlight beam
of radiance
that comes on like a rush
of lightning
that scares.
Your life is unknown to him.
He unscrambles
from under his body
and finally flees
crying, 'Christ, I'm glad I got
away,
I'm glad I'm
ok.'
A leaf may rustle
in fervid summer wind
and the animal needs air.
Panting, escaping into
some camouflaged hiding place
or a hunter's den display case.
If you should ask
I'll tell you
why

I unscramble
from under my body
to escape the deafening noise
and run from bright light.

TIN PLACES

Do you know
that I've seen
the light of your scheme
Because
those walks
a vision
hands in pocket
eyes to sky
dark cloudless blue
I've seen you
in carlight
moonlight
starlight
the warning signals flashed bright
on the crest of a great revelation
on the dawn of some new day.
I was feeling
Blue
Like a cold blue icicle
in suspension
off some
Blue
steel construction
placed steadily by
you.
And it's fallen through my head
Down
Down
Making tears
freeze
and fall
Down
Down
my face
like crystal ice beads
tinkling against
Tin Places.
A dream of steel.
Blue
invulnerable
against
You.

PIES

Ice laden through winter
defrosting in the spring
summer enters
sweltering,
melting.
They flock
dreamy-squint-eyed to the sun
where tourist fun is sold
by the pools and docks
of bays,
and the sea
where flotsam floating worries are forgotten
for a two week vagrancy.

Wessan-oiled, the spectators
in the heat
of sweet sunshine
prepare to imbibe the sun
into winter-pale
scale-skin.
And gazing
dreamy-squint-eyed into
the depths of pools
in search of cool
refreshment,
they recall last summer's bravery
and this summer's uncertainty
about unknown depths
and dive
headlong into the sun
glistening on water's reflection,
Wessan-oiled bodies
beading
the water's rejection

Sunshine has burned them.
Their faces, necks and thighs
cry their Noxema-need
as they prepare a sandy goodbye
to a vacation that is over.
Faces flushed,
burned into brown bubbles
that peels off like crust,
revealing pale, pasty,
unbaked insides.
Untouched by the warmth
they return
refrigerator cold.

DROUGHT

The drought has passed
and a gushing stream is finally flowing
past the absorbing boulders
waiting at the mouth
for a fallen word
to be spoken.

The oily rainbowed stagnation
had painted eyes
bright.
The deception was that
no one really noticed that the
light
had broken

It was just a short afternoon
shower,
oily rainbows were swirling slow,
Exhausted with the superficial
glass-like surface.
The rain brought a flood
of relief
and a brief
combination of the surface
elements,
and the elements held below,
shopping carts,
bicycle parts,
an inner-tube of inflated ideas.

The sun came shining through
grey clouds of delusion,
helping me to go
along the way absorbing myself.
Eyes were painted
a bright rainbow
from the sunlight. . .
mind-glowing.

OLD WORLD TRAVELS

Discussions of the aqualab,
the sextant,
some Prince Henry
inventor and navigator of

the sea,
and the sea called me
down among the rigging of the desk,
having unconsciously blessed
myself upon hearing the sirens
wail.
Teacher told the tales
of the New World
adding
Spices and Gold bouillion to my thoughts,
while Christopher Columbus
drifted along the plane
of the wood-grained
swirling sea.
It continued calling me
down among the rigging of
the desk.
Over the globe
and spectacled windows
I sailed past alphabet stars
in the waves of the sky,
over the cars,
down the avenue
waving goodbye to a church steeple
laughing at the people
chained to desks.
Signal of the bells,
A shuffling to new cells.

TO FORGET

When you asked me to help you
it gave me that queer feeling
of not knowing what to do
or say,
and it reminded me of that day
I stood beside a hospital bed
with my crazy Uncle Bill
wishing he was dead.
He had fallen too,
and his life was broken
like his leg.
He was rambling something about
a laundrymat
and how dirty the floor
must be getting,
while the doctor was saying,
'They just don't heal at 84.'

He groped for my hand,
pleading, 'help me up,'
but the nurse kept pushing him down.
'Drink your juice, would you like some toast?'
'Is there anything I can get for you?'
But his voice just got all choked,
crying they'd revoked his
license.
When he died, I remembered again
that queer feeling,
I don't often think of it now,
it's buried and past.
Cancel all regrèt,
Forget.
It does not last.

CANDICE LLOYD

IN MEMORIAM: BLANCHE DUBOIS

Ashes like dead paper roses
take their place in the spilled scotch
congealed ketchup composition of
the rug
She nods, almost suppliant
into a state of former grace
her crumpled countenance
unfolds
and I remember having heard
of a time when the others glimpsed
your smile and filled with jealousy
yet they returned it
Will we ever refuse to slaughter
the lamb who finds it possible
to love the strong arm that
wields the knife of destruction?
Rather, look towards stage left
enter: the priest
the room filled before him
with his divinely demented cry
as the victim echoes
retracing ripples of a stone
dropped long ago

HOT HOUSE FLOWER

My husband waves his perfectly manicured hand from the matching garden. The gleaming borrowed grin is also the property of bank clerk and bank president. I have watched him sanctimoniously bestow it upon them. Pretending to be only casually looking, I watched and watched, charting the growth of the bitterness that crept between the corners of his smile. We think of the cavernous entrances into the body. Not his. His, full to the brim with the hypocrisy that is the first budding of fear. At first, I tried to kiss it away--but it was rooted so firmly! The substance frightened and excited me. Down among all the green, my husband is carelessly echoing a refrain from a past duet that was performed at the breakfast table. I do not remember my lines and so I do nothing visible. Instead I wonder why I haven't given this husband of mine a name but he is, after all, imaginary and therefore does not need one. He is not my husband either. Not really. If I were to call him something I might tell him That as well. And *that* I don't want him to know. Not yet. I am not yet ready to let him see my growth--bursting the confines of his jewel box prison--only then will he marvel at my blossoms in full bloom.

VINEGAR SUNDAY

At Easter
the eggs were made
by dripping the end of a pin
into hot wax
applying warm droplets
to the cold shells
allowing them to
soak themselves afterwards
in baths of green
red
sometimes purple
dyes
that smelt of my mothers thighs
the mornings after
she and father had made love
and i could not lie my head
in her lap
until after she performed
her vaginal ablution
Once

i remember
overhearing her say that
as soon as she cleaned herself
he was ready to soil her again
and i
being very young
could not understand what was dirty

HIJACKER

'my palms are sweating.
anyway--
it's your rubber band
so
hold me
ground me fast
sweet sister stewardess'
he screams (to him)
sight (to us)
but
she stalls--
'Joyce Carole Oates
said
she would not make
 love to a dying man
i read it
 in the transatlantic review
and besides--
 your skin
 brings memories of duco cement
 congealed in the tailspins
 of balsa birds
 to touch it
 would be sabotage
 i've never wanted
 to be a saint
 so you won't mind
 will you
 if i sit here--
 biting the back of my hand
 and silently
 watch
 your pain.'

IMPRESSIONS OF CLAUDE DEBUSSY'S *IMPRESSIONS DE LA MER*

she was floating on her back
when the sun
weary with stretched summer days
began to melt her away
while i looked on
sun stunned myself
finally reaching her
as she hung in jellyfish suspension
upon the sea
unafraid
asking me to swim back and
make a paper boat
to float tickled laughter
from the ripples of my love
i sunk into her smile
amid the murky rainbows
of oiled residues
and waded in her warmth
as she came crashing
against my chest
her bubbles shattering with my heart
until we were calm again
i cannot let go of my face
she softly murmured
shedding salty tears
into pools within pools
i have loved it too little
and too well
so i kissed her shivering lips
into the water
knowing (then)
that we create only memories
warm currents
wrapped once round my legs
then moved on
leaving me
solitary
motionless
to wait for a wave's caress

SMALL NIGHT SONG

a fleeting peace
 in singular mood
 until a changing chord
 pulls and twists
 while we hold fast
 with our
 hands
 hearts
 entwined in the chorus
 of the night
 afterwards--
 a small hollow
 in the curve
 of your neck
 accomodates my cheek
 this new
 pulsating rhythm
 carries me
 with you
 into sleep

LATER

in the dim
 you materialize
 pale
 life drawn from
 the shadows of reverie
 with this growth
 i am eased
 into another time
 when cheek laid softly
 softly
 with heartbeat
 held within the very
 definition of
 warmth
 eyes lowered to
 thin fingers
 splayed
 across smooth flesh
 this peace
 found in the moments
 before sleep
 the joy upon waking
 has taken leave
 as did you

MOTIF

time	} raining	early evening
place		a doorway-- small

characters--	a man	} neither young nor old
	a woman	

costume--without raincoats or umbrellas

enter--somewhere in a conversation

THE WOMAN: sometimes he does the dinner dishes . . .
 sometimes I do . . . we both can't fit in the kitchen . . .
 the apartment is very small and we have very little
 furniture . . . we eat dinner on the floor . . . a picnic . . .
 there is a large red linen cloth which we spread upon
 a rug of green leaves . . . unfortunately there are no

ants . . . still . . . it is better than a table . . . breakfast is
grabbed at . . . so here I remain . . . missing the high-
light of my day after lunching from a paper bag . . .
after dinner we make love . . . then fall off to sleep . . .
covered by a quilt patched with tiny doll's umbrellas . . .
that was made by his grandmother.

THE MAN: I too was once in love. . . the girl had
come to stay with my family for the summer. She
was the daughter of a friend of my mother's. We
were fused together by the summer and managed
to retain that season's heat throughout the winter.
The spring rains cooled her passion while melting the
ice. One morning that was filled with flowers I came
down to breakfast to find her gone. I was sick and
embarrassed before my mother's pitying eyes. In my
bed, I waited for her. She never came. Finally I got
up and resumed life without her.

THE WOMAN: you are bitter still

THE MAN: only because of you . . . now . . . if it
were not for him it would be me you were dining
with each night.

THE WOMAN: perhaps . . . and then I would be with
you until the sun peeled you from me, like a greedy
child tearing tissue from a bon-bon . . . then sent you
scuttling in search of other seasons, moist and new. She
left you in the rain and in the rain you seek to recover
your loss. With the sun you found her and with the
sun you will seek her again and again. I know your
eyes and their sad story well.

THE MAN: it's stopped raining.

THE WOMAN: let's go.

they exit and the doorway sighs an end

AMERICAN SPRING

American spring
early May
we first kissed
under the bleachers
in the schoolyard
his tongue ran across my lips
a gentle insertion
i had never thought--

keeping mine to myself.
baiting him
down into me
feeling so
aggressively passive
the air smelling of exploration
i of him
he of me
life squirming
far in left field
and the grass stains
on white trousers
why not on me
lie and wonder
why not in me

ODE TO AN EMBRYO

there is a murderer
in my house
an angel of destruction
who played at God
sits over eggs benedict
and a front page reading
'Man slaughters wife,
three children, then shoots
self'
a different sort of killer
than I
whose halfhearted attempts
to end it all
now appear ludicrous
who remains at table
serene with the knowledge
that my good aunt
in possession of the
other half of the paper
would shit
if she knew my story
still, she applauded her
nephew for bravery
in the line of duty
and again
then again
I dream my mother
would have done
as I have done
instead she killed my spirit

to save her soul
this is not meant as
explanation or
justification
for my deed
my only wonder
is the ease with which
it was done
the absence of remorse
that followed
in the moments between
sleeping and waking
were I the keeper of
the flame
would I
with casual breath
murder us all
murderers all

GROUPIE

bright beams bounce
from rock star lovers
with their steely instruments
they travel around the world
while nimble fingers
explore foreign ports

SURGEON

out there
the search among
grey matters
in here
my mouth
runs over
spills
fresh blood
onto
your hands
waiting
to serve
a communion
of catgut
sponge fingertips
from
the womb
of the sea
perpetuate
and absorb
pain
as
administration
of
a steely tongue
sloughs away
growths
of darkness
its rough
otherside
mimics
the application
of a feline mother
to her
raw
new
offspring
healer
heal my dreams

THE EFFECT OF THE PERIOD UPON THE MOVEMENT

She is not your good little girl
the dancing adorable
whose laughing eyes brought
tears to yours
and left you
so proud
at having her on your arm
that you never really looked
into them
or you would have become
granite
no one could see in time
to turn away quickly
so you never looked
into those eyes
that pulled me down
 washed over by waves of heat
when those eyes went dead
 it was so cold
in a second
 melting flesh went rigid
with its lush sounds of accompaniment
trapped behind
 walls of bone
my beautiful little girl died
in giving birth to a viper
 whose fiery breath devoured
all around
 before the sun while it towered
and absorbed that radiance
into poisonous scales
 jeweled tapestries
dazzling to behold
 fatal to the touch
the siren song did not issue from
 its slender throat
but emanated from its color
 into the surrounding air
and devoured my mind
leaving all else grey in comparison
 even your good little girl
the creature spun webs
 of crystal lies
 and shared
 their shattering laughter

sweet shards of pain
made shame of
truth's mundane pretentiousness
dying
i felt fulfilled
but like a snake in the grass
it ran from its own reflection
mirrored in my acceptance
like a good little girl
until a pebble
broke the stream of
consciousness and
you were there
smooth
warm when i noticed the wind
every breath brought you closer
and another moment was passed
each step i took
was a step towards you
each movement brought you closer
were i to remain still
motionless
less than a whisper in the wind
with your keen senses
you would find me
and together we would burn

PAUL BIRK

MARVELOUS INVENTIONS

he'd spoke with her before
through the agency of
Alexander Graham Bell's telephone.

(it's a marvelous invention
when the wires buzz hot)

he'd taken her out for
a picture show and a spin
in his mother's automobile.

(marvelous inventions those autos-
it was a Henry Ford, updated
and classy)

he saw her every night for
a summer and a half on her
front porch,
but kissed her only once--
not wishing to defile his love
with lip prints.

(horrid inventions those prints--
it's been said in religious corners
God has been shot in the back
thrice
for ever dreaming such a thing)

he purchased a biplane for her
and a bicycle for himself
so he could follow her safely.

(marvelous inventions those aeroplanes--
he bought the plane from Wilbur
and the bike from Orville at a
friendly discount)

on and on he told himself he
would never leave her and he
never really wanted to
for a while.

but as he swung on her porch swing
with her towards the end of
the summer

and as he lay in his bed
dreaming, he began to think
of second chances,
and afterwards, when
she called him, he began to
think of the time she crashed
her plane into the bandstand
and killed a few negro jazz
men.

(lazy inventions those negros--
it's been said in political circles
a president was shot in the
head
for ever dreaming them free)

she made him clean them up
while she groomed her
pedigree french poodle.
he could never forget
the mangled horns and faces
or the shine from the
poodle.

he began to drift and she began

to fill her hope chest with
stolen promises and letters of
love copied while at the
picture show.
he used words from those letters
to complete the ruse
and cover his desire for a
second hope while his family
arranged a marriage in a garden
over their cup of tea.

(marvelous inventions those tea leaves--
parents use them often to
cast the future of their children)

he feels sad now as he
swings on the porch and
tries to stave his guilt,
he sits off
to one side and throws the swing
off balance as he stares
at the empty space between
him and his betrothed.

she clasps each hand in
anguish and sits quiet
and still as a school desk at
four o'clock,
and only moving to kick
her curly mutt away.

they still talk through Mr.
Bell but the ringing
never leaves her ears.
and as she waits for
his response from the things she
tried to say,
he lies back and gets trails
off the broken conversation
and fidgets with the frayed cord
in his hand.

(it's a marvelous invention
when the wires buzz hot.)

HOW HE AMAZED HIMSELF ON PAPER

he sat down every night,
or at least every morning,
and wrote his name on every

piece of paper he could find.

sometimes he would put
a Title over his name

or a poem or story
under the Title and his
name

but most times he
would just sign his signature
in neat lines that
reminded him of a grade
school punishment.

some say he wrote his name
well

and most liked the stories or
poems he sometimes put
under it (or so they led him
to believe)

but all agreed writing made
him strange in a way
and brusque in a manner
of dealing.

he thought, once, that he would
like to see the name he had
seen so often on the cover of a
book.

maybe a different place might
add a bit of splendor to it,
or curb its overtones.

so he gathered up the pages
from his desk, bound them
manuscript style, and took
them to his teachers and friends
at school to get
opinions from them.

but he knew he could write well
and he knew he could have published
something if only
he could erase his name from all
he had written.

so you see,
it wasn't for criticism that
he submitted his works
to teachers and friends--
it was only to hear his
name,
over and over,
as they read his manuscript
aloud.

THE MIGRATION OF THE MINSTREL

Swooping down from out the skies,
the music
wings its way along the flyways,
following a V of water fowl
until it turns elliptical
and descends on a lake
resplendent with morning's
sunshine.
then, like all those of silent
passage,
it rests—
choosing its place,
not amongst the fowl who
have bombarded the lake
with their bodies—
but on the lakeside,
where it lies undetected among the
reeds swayed by the flutterings
of dripping wings—
on the lakeside—
where it lies safe from
the splashings of webbed feet.

There it feasts, undisturbed, on
shoots of wild rice,
overlooked by gamely fowl
in their search for food.
here it is sheltered
from the bustle (which always occurs
after the fowl have landed)
that forces the
cool lake waters
up!
then
down
the bank thrice,
cleansing from the sands
traces of all who
came before?
traces of all those who
imitated the exercise
with an eye on infinity,
while knowing little of
the rhythm of waves

Red in summer
Blue in winter
Pale in permanence

when they migrate their texture
changes—
but they are not
actually swayed by northern rhymes
nor charmed by southern skies,
rather,
they remain bound
to the moods
of the one
who lies cowering on shore.

* * *

Wandering from out the
shallow confines of the
shore,
a piece of driftwood,
shaped like the head of
an alligator, becomes an object
of curiosity for a convoy of ducklings.
Its presence interrupts
their mother's swimming lesson
and increases the likeliness
of natural selection
for as the ducklings
nip at each
knothole,
the mother passes on impassively
to the other side of
the lake,
where a ridge of
clay and sand was
seen rolling away.
She has forced herself
abandon her children
to the breezey sort
of guidance
that moves about the
shining lake, so that,
in a quiet way,
beyond this quiet lake,
she may chase the strands
of water that leak
through an opening
that once was a

ridge of
restless sand and
spineless clay.

*

The side which has
formed this unwarranted tributary
is elevated
and its downward slope facilitates
the escape of
water to the
river that lies ahead.

The lake, whose opposite side is the
base of a mountain,
can only be replenished by
the rains,
since its mountain shore's springs,
once deep in foam,
have long exhausted
any stores from within.
and now,
with the closest clouds
tied to a forest on the leeward side
of its thirsty mountain friend,

the wounded lake worries
about each clump of root
clogged clay that
loosens and erodes away,
further draining cherished
energy from its soul that
stands on nothing else.

its fowl fly perplexed
as the waters spill outward
in a small stream and carve a gully
in its own elevation.

Where is their home wandering now?
they ask themselves,

Is it no more the faithful
home they thought it to be?

Why doesn't its gleaming
waters hold their reflections
as it washes the trunks of
trees that grow on the slope?

Why does it curve
like a spreading root as it
twists toward a hollow, moss
lined log placed perpendicular

to the river that runs parallel
to a mountain range?
And why do some parts of it flow
through the log that hangs over
the river while others flow
around it
when all fall to the
river and turn it blue?

Some of its fish have followed
the churning outlaw by accident
and a wild goose and his
companions
play cowboy
with the leaping slivers of
tapering scales—
herding them over rapids of
crumbled leaves,
and falls of diseased trees
until they form a brighter sun
in the middle of the lake—
a sun whose emanations
will crease the lake only a
short while longer,
giving grace to all who need it,
so that even the clumsy may fall
gracefully.

* * *

in the red of summertime,
in the blue of winter,
in the pallid permanent residence,
the northern runes that mumble on
and the southern skies that sadden at sunset
mull over methods of keeping the lake aloft
but cushioning any success they
may have will be the
rushing air of the one who
lies secreted in the reeds.

* * *

Rolling from out the rushes
are the misty eyes
of an intruder.
they skim from
lakeside to lakeside,
recessed in disappointment
yet hoping in their desire

to find all they had seen from the distance.
the images they have
so far grasped
in nearness
mock them because,
this once,
reality does not comfort
their expectations

and because of this
the grayish eyes slip into
melancholy and gaze at
a reflection, barred in pondweeds,
for elation—
but only see
dust covered 'plumage'
about a slight feminine frame
and a faded yellow hat,
shading their mistiness
from the sun.

suddenly!
the fowl are astir on the laketop—
they sense the presence of an alien
in the lingering grayness
that tinges their supple necks
and paddle according to
instinct,
believing a mountain cat
has slid down from
the highlands to poach their young.
they are frightened by the grass
bending under something that
steals toward them,
and they move closer to the
lake's wound out of fear.

Just as suddenly!
the tall grass is parted
but the figure that holds
it back only resembles a cat's
feeling—
not its intent.
all wings spread
to fly, fold under
once more and the
stillness loses danger's hush.
As long as their safety is
immediate the fowl will not

let their indifference
succumb to curiosity.
instead, they unfocus their
eyes until the intruder turns
chameleon and blends with a background,
easily overlooked,
as they concentrate their fear on the lake.

* * *

The mist is turned to dust
which clings to the wrinkles
in her clothing
and her shallow hands
smooth its film from her face.
her boots have been pryed off with
the edge of a rock
and left in the lake to cool
as her back softens
in the spreading sand.
the yellow hat is
placed over her
face to keep her
waxen eyes from melting
and her brownish red hair,
once bent about her face,
is flung out along
the shore to lighten.
She has come a long way
to be noticed
but before her boots dry
she will be on her way again.
She is the one
who saw the lake from the
crest of its mountain shore
and the one whose eyes drew her
on until her reflection—
barred in pondweeds—
reminded her of what she is.
She was also the one who
crawled on her knees
through the tall grass
to get a better look
at the fowl who so unjustly
shunned her
when she was only trying
to find out if they were what
she had seen from the mountain top.

She is the minstrel,
lonelier than the village,
quieter than the lake
she rests beside.

She is the Minstrel
who is always roaming
and finds much of yesterday
in her sleep.
*

Turning slowly into madness,
sinking deeper in the sand,
are the thoughts of those
she's after—are the thoughts
of those she chases, in
slumber, from the shore.
she sees them as they leap
from the crumbling battlements
of a besieged castle and fears as they
burn their archives with a
forest.
she finds, among the ages,
kings and queens hiding
in a loyal peasant's hut—
tasting the brackish soup
that drips from the stone
hut's walls.

She is moved by them.
They are days in the sun, set adrift—
They are holes in the sky, blackening.

She follows a king,
who has forsaken the soup
flooded hut, through a potter's
field and watches as the
curious despot rolls around
the foul smelling dust
in his stately robes, laughing.
she even laughs herself
when the king bumps into a
cluster of unknown stones and
begins to tell them quaint
stories of majestic knights who
sank in the moat,
and steaming dragons who
demanded maiden tongues . . .
she smiles once more at the
grown king who treats the

stones as if they were
grandchildren,
letting each one try on his
crown in turn . . .
then leaves the jabbering monarch
and his rounded subjects
to glide through a meadow
she saw twinkling in the distance.

there she finds a man,
whitehaired and aged,
sitting behind a huge oaken desk,
writing as if in dire frenzy.

a brook glides down the hill in front o
of him,
and another from the hill behind him.
the two meet and form a whirlpool by his chair
in which his lengthy beard dangles—
spinning round and round,
stretching longer and longer,
but he doesn't seem to notice.
he stops mid page to ponder the sky
through moustached eyes
then dabs his quill in his
inkwell thoughtfully
and mumbles incessantly as if on the
verge of something . . .
eyelids crouch lower—
writing hand stiffens on the quill—
images are tensed and ready to
spring onto the yellowed parchment—
he moves his arm slowly at
first, creating only a succession of
rough scratches . . .
then the scrapes build,
one line . . .
two lines . . .
one page . . .
two pages . . .
until the steady hum of
his quill creates a breeze
that spurs the whirlpool on and
makes the hanging trees peer over
his shoulder in the hope he may write
of them . . .
but they are ignored by the old man as
he chases his twirling pen

towards the sun, pressing harder
on the paper 'til
finally his old lungs slack off,
wheezingly, and he slouches back,
unable to follow any longer.
what he has writ is over and
the breeze has died
disappointing the hanging
trees.

he examines the page closely
then trips down from his chair
and commits his writings,
still dripping with words, to the
vortex
that carries them round and round
with his beard
past days in the sun, set adrift
past holes in the sky, blackening.

* * *

As the sun draws
the horizon closer to its
fiery rim;
a faint itch stirs
the sleeping
minstrel.
dreams hold her fast and
she overrides them with reluctance
because she knows they are worth
more than all that matters.
she awakens, rolling over to
glimpse a reddening sky
but it only takes her
back to dreams
like days in sun, drifting,
like holes in the sky, blackening.
however, in spite of their luster,
she must rise, turn away and be going,
before she grows apart from
their romance.

*

because she wants to remember
the sand, she ties her
boots round her shoulder and
walks barefoot on the shore of
dream—prepared to leave another place, again,
for a better place again.

as she walks, she clasps, in playing manner,
her instrument—
a fine wooden remembrance,
whose subtle curves so nearly
match her own.
it has twelve hair-like strings—
all attuned and in
sympathy with one another—
that she nettles in until
distant notes arise in waves
of memories and flow out into
the twilight.
she sets her eyes loose again,
for she has found she wants
to remember more than the
sand, and they come to
rest upon the small outlet
where the fowl have gathered in
their trepidation.
She wants to calm them,
She wants them to gather round
her like the flocking children from
the villages—
She needs them to notice her music
and She feels it can save them (and the lake)
from a dwindling death.
but it is self pity, not concern,
that summons up the feelings
of her own lost home
and helps them to her instrument's strings
with moistened eyes and
returning heart.
Her heart being her song,
the music contained therein
pulsates gently through her fingers—
fingers, being instruments themselves,
move to cover frets and vibrate
strings until the rhythm of her
song accompanies the Rhythm of Waves,
and the tune drifting forth restores
her breath
so that her lips may
form the lyrics
that disguise the movements of her
chest—
softly sinking, slowly rising—
expressing the sorrow and

despair of there being no one
left to play to.

however the fowl are
unmoved by the melody
and merely renew their efforts
to heal the lake's wound
by choking it
with their bodies.
but it doesn't really
matter to the minstrel either
for she has ignored them
in turn—
trading their attention
for the attention her song
demands of her.

* * *

So the fowl
conspire while
the minstrel praises
the red of summertime,
cries
the blue of winter's snow
and neglects to mention
the ghastly
pallor, of permanence.

but listen!

as the northern syncopations
reverberate in her rhymes
and the southern skies hum
her tune in wind until
that which binds them all in the
rushing air is no longer
stilled by the plaintive
murmurs of the lake.

No one has heard it
'til asked if they have.
it's not an open thing,
nor a thing which satisfies curiosity,
nor a thing all now possess,
nor a thing at all.

if it were a pattern it
certainly would not
be apparent
so why do all look
for ceremonies in the night
and leaders in the alley?
so far teachings have taught

us those places but how surprised
one would be if, coming across
the lake scene, he suddenly knew
that between a song and its
fullness lie a flock of stolid
water fowl—
how dazzled one would be if
he felt the minstrel's
beauty—
and how close to nothing else one
would be if he imagined there
was something else in
the reeds besides wind and that it
has always been intrigued with
the music of its minstrels.

* * *

From out its silent fortress of
reeds passes a thrilling
wave of tasteless invisibility.
it spans the lake on a bridge of
notes the minstrel has constructed
with her song and it rushes
closer to her side—
spinning feathers into the
air as its swiftness disturbs
the tepid fowl in its haste
to reach the opposing shore . . .

The minstrel is awesomely excited
by something she has found
trapped in her song and continues playing,
hoping to rediscover . . .
the eyes turn misty
she has lost it . . .

She begins again, sadly,
though the notes seem to
fall apart in her hand as she searches
for a measure of her lost strength.
she doesn't know that it has
traversed the lake
and now lurks all about her.

wishing her song would rise
above the swelter of her anticipation
she begins to improvise hoping to
catch it in chance and as she does it
begins to sound more and more

familiar—
 though she never heard it
 even once before!
a title for the improvisation
 appears in her head
 but she can't pronounce it
without losing its meaning—
 it clings to many other words
 and many other worlds
 and so becomes tangled in them . . .
yet they come so close to desire—
 ringing from a deeper
 dimension—
 one further on than sleep!
but she can't sing or play it correctly,
 she can only hint
 at what it must be.

she tries to curve the mire
 of worlds and words into
something she can memorize and hold—
 but each defies her as if they cherish
 their freshness.

 they begin to confuse and taunt her
 more and more as they
play on and on—
They give her no relief from
 the onslaught of discordant sounds
 coursing through her brain
 because they differ so from all
the ballads and folk songs she
 lived by before . . .
 the music will not come down—
 she senses that
 it is the minstrel who must
 migrate
 and she senses that also.

she will go and
 she can still follow.
 though all she plays
 is strange and all she
 tries to sing, misleading,
 she knows she can still follow
 and she knows she will go.

Resolutions pass into power
 as light enters behind them

and rooms deeply and beautifully
in veiled illumination.
the minstrel is startled by the
rattled rush of precision which
cuts the yawns in her timing and
clears the haze from the worded worlds.
she does not
know what to do for a moment
but something in the aura that surrounds
her suggests a continuance of
a theme made safe to play without
feeling homeless—
and she follows.

her hands spin on the strings as
she plays the first thing that comes to
comes to them—
her lips quiver richly with
words she never thought possible
and she flicks them out into the
fullmoon night where the lyrics
and notes are intertwined with starshine
and set fluttering about the lake—
echoing and winglike—
then dipped below the surface to
swell the lake in their fervor.
she wrenches the fowl from worry with
notes that re-arch their necks and
swing their beaded bills in the direction
of an inescapable joy,
and sways the reeds, grass and trees
in a rhythm perhaps only their roots understand.
though all try to breath free,
all are possessed by the
singing and strumming from the
shore—
and all reach past the early
evening stars and rest,
assembled in currents that separate
and suspend them in space . . .

the minstrel finds her own uniqueness
in all that has passed and
she uses it with disgression,
changing the mood with
each progression of chords—
fretting each string tighter—

wringing out eerie, floating
sounds that make fowl swim
under fish and fish fly over fowl.

the music has put her where
she has never been before and
it enables her to envision herself
carried by it through villages unseen.
where there is no crowd,
(though it feels as though
there is one) and her overturned
hat—now banded with a
black ribbon and glowing
yellower than days in the sun—
is not filled
with pitied pennies.
she is where she is when all
to be done is done.
where it is simple to harmonize
and turn the beating of hearts
into the rhythm of waves.
finally,
she has found all that frightened her.

* * *

A crack groans deep in the
high wall of the lake's elevation—
strained by sound
coaxed by song.
it grows unnoticed by minstrel and lake
life because it spreads under the
escaping stream like a tiny thread.
this crack branches naturally
when afforded the pressure of the lake's
dancing waters and it unravels
in an array of offshoots
that cancerize the entire height and width
of the elevation.
it creaks, now and then, as it opens
wider but its threatening noise
is muffled by the stream which
cleans and hollows it as it passes
over and through its maze-like
patterns.

then, a tremor of warning arises as the
great rock foundation of the lake shifts—
but the minstrel does not miss
a beat—

and its waters plunge inward
after retreating fissures—
but the fowl don't
realize they sink where they sing.
each tension strung note
increases
the rumblings from below, and she,
shivering on the shore,
takes them as a desirous response from
an otherwise immoveable earth.

she thinks the laborious
heaving of the elevation is as harmless
as the fowl's reaction to the
song and in mistaking its bulging
desire for ecstasy doesn't realize
it weakens with each intake of
air and questions its limits as
it exhales the lake.

The thickening stream vibrates immensely
as the opening grows and the lake's
shoreline is saddened by the
departure of its liquid
blanket that has left its sands
to squirm, dry in the moonlight.
the stream draws added support from the
lake and as it diminishes
the lake's shoreline it carves the flat
piece of land that separates
river and lake into a gully—
brown with debris,
dense in horror.

the gully had foreshadowed it in the
moonlight so it came as no surprise
when, finally a section outlined
by twisting cracks—
the section upon which the
minstrel stands with
her song—
loosens and teters backwards.

she almost falls but manages to pull
herself back by playing against
gravity.

from her perch she sees the
crack that yawns malignantly

as it spews the lake into the night.
she sees also the glistening bubbles
of pain that arise from the lake
and they make her hate the song
of their cause.
she tries to stop playing for
she senses the lake can stand
her no longer but her hands
are not hers anymore and they
do not respond—
they only slow and sadden as
much as the lake's regressing
shore.

she tries to fling her
instrument into the lake but it
clings to her hands and
plays on.
she throws herself to the ground
and tries to writhe the song into
the sand but it will not part
with her—
she presses it closer to crush it
but its vibrations sting her
arms and body into submission and she
rises again on the crumbling shore of dream..

* * *

In the midst of this accident the
torment of the minstrel is lost
to the stress of the rended lake.
and she falls again
unable to rise with the music
that has creased the lake with its
promise . . .

she drifts gladly from the song
which has mechanized her fingers.
and is happy that the song was
never really hers.
she closes her eyes and fades into
dreams of past travels along
dusted roads . . .

so long ago they
were there to curl 'round hills
and fold out lazily in autumn
fields. sometimes they would force
their ruts on her heels, but
she knew how it felt to have

a direction forked and she
understood their angered
retaliation,
she is a calmed old friend, now,
as they welcome back,
the prodigal sister into
their laced gravel and usher her
into days of spirited lanes
and mimicked monotony.
they have forgiven the one who forsook
them and prove their virtue
by clearing any traces of stale
mistiness from her troubled eyes,
and by enveloping her fatigue
in their winding ways.

Retreat has dissolved into starshine
and as the minstrel's unfamiliar hands
descend the neck of her instrument
faint flecks of stardust fall
like snow melted by untold radiance . . .
the pitch of the obsessed song grows
higher and higher and causes the
rumblings to moan lower from the depths
of the lake's inclination.
the music edges the entire wall
toward the river,
crumbling it as it inches out—
and then it bursts it wide in a
thundering mass of
oozing silt and shattered rocks
that peel and hang hotly in
the moonlit air!
the force of the explosion fells the
trees and plants gripped nearest
it and the waters that outpour
drag their stumps and stems
over any jagged rock to be
found on the way to the river.

The breach that extends below
the bottom of the lake has given
the waters the long sought lowest
level and the mammoth onrush of
water occasioned by their relief
sucks the fish from their
circle sun with brutal,

fin bending currents.
any fowl who did not break the spell
of the song were curled under,
broken winged, by the torrent,
and any fowl who did, fled disaster
speedily in a crowded cloud of
confusion, and now spiral around
the lake and stare as it moves
over the ruined barrier—
exposing more of its remaining
shores to the pale gloating of the moon.

but neither the eys of the few fowl
who soared upward,
nor the pain numbed remnants of
the sunken shore,
nor the flood swept fish that regrouped
in the river,
could discover,
when they recovered,
any trace or clue
of the light that reigned on the
shore before their fall or the minstrel
who vanished with it.
all three converse in hoarse tones about
the mystery—
speaking of the glow . . .
asking if the minstel was more
romantic than right . . .

But only one ascendant and detached from
all that happened could know,
and the stoic mountain, moved to pity
by all it knows, tries to squeeze
a teardrop from its snow cap—
but none will be released,
it perceived, in its aloofness,
the trance-like indifference gifted
to the minstel by her dreams and it
knew it prevented her from
being deafened by the heinous
roar let loose by the lake's faulting foundation
or dizzied by the twirling waters
that bore her up from her decaying
perch only to hurl her downwards and
crush, forever, the strength of her
song and its purpose in life.
It sees the milky residue that clings to

its base and it wonders what
the few fish trapped in the
slime and algae think of the air
so sacred to all who subsist above water
it is disgusted with the fowl who have
landed in the soggy basin because they
refused to believe the lake
was over and it hopes they remain sick
in the slime and keep the fish,
who fell behind the current, company.
it despises the river that greedily
laps up its lake friend's waters
and it wishes it could roll over
and damn the river until a new
lake formed to quiet its base.
but it curbs its anger, pity,
sorrow and desire to keep its
facade from crumbling and its
face from breaking out in landslides,
and watches instead the spillage
from the lake wind down as all that
maintained its even transport
slowly steals away.
it strains, as it glimpses in the stream
a curious mass of splinters and
strings that has arisen from out the flotsam
of feathers, twigs and leaves, and it wants,
just once more, to view the textured
hands that made the splinters
wood.
it finds what will satisfy
it for the ages cupping the water
behind the fragments of their
livelihood—
trying to reach them before they pass
on to the river's swirling clutches.

the minstrel's arms spin like pinwheels
on the water but they soon tire
with the rest of her body and she relaxes
in her churning bath
and lets the slivers of her song
slip over the bank and fall into
the river.

her feet drag on the gully's bottom for
the stream has not even a portion
of its original bouyancy
and its strength expended to support the
minstrel dwindles lower
until it can only convey her to the
very edge of the river bank,
flow slowly over her,
and expire . . .

She is wet and broken as she lies there,
but she can still sing.
she is bruised and aching but can still
hear and see above and through the
throbbing.
she doesn't let her mind wander to
the muddy ones whose age or preoccupation
held them fast and made death their
last wish,
nor does she dream, as she turns
to sleep by the river, of banished
kings or men of letters who sailed
their pages round the whirlpool—
instead,
she is lulled into nothing else
by sounds first heard approaching
from behind the river's bend . . .

slender, full crewed watercraft,
wrapped in barnacled hulls,
move quietly between the arching
banks of the river bend.
they are uncountable in number
and they fill the river with their
silver silence as they glide over
it to a place beyond.
the boats are open and propelled by
oars that scratch the river's glass
and the hardy crews who pull them
up dripping, shine in the moonlight.
there are women, children and men in
the boats that seem to have no use
for the water and though the boats
teem with bodies headed for a hundred
new ships they rest so very lightly
on the surface that they make no ripples—
no spreading trails—
on the river that puzzles under them,

the grinding swivel of the oarlocks
is suddenly stilled as the helmsmen
of the lead boat leans his rudder
hard to port—
his eyes sharpened by a thousand
watches in the crow'snest
have sighted something on the shore
and he slows the procession of boats
to find reason for his excitement.
he makes a sweeping swerve for land
and pierces the bank with the razored
bow as he grounds the boat expertly.
the helmsmen and his crew then
climb out of the boat,
scamper through the mud to the
mouth of the gully . . .
and stop.

their eyes bounce queerly round their
faces for a moment, then suddenly
turn downwards to further regard the
figure that sleeps in a calmed
hue by their feet.
they complete a few embarrassed formalities
despite their surprise and manage
to wrap the minstrel in a captain's
coat and bear her gently down the
embankment to the boat that awaits them.

but even as they place her aft by
the kindly helmsmen—
even as they shove off towards
their destination—
the boats and the river are alive
with questions—
but their answers sleep on.

*

She is the Minstrel,
who will always roam
and find many songs in her soul
as it banters with the wind.

She is the Minstrel,
lovelier than the village,
livelier than the river that
rests all around her.

*

*

*

Through dawns unheeded the music
and its minstrels flow on
rivers where longboats and their
boatmen row to a point in
providence that will pierce the
mesh of mud caked fowl
and drying fish.

AL dePROSPERO

NARCISSO, MIO DOLOR

From consideration of the room
Eyes fall to window--
Run-down stature of the city beyond?
Dorian yet, shadows still beautiful, old.
And Angelus tells the still world they survey
All bow in evening's velveteen embrace.
The new building, windows stained chalco,
The cellophane umbrella of the fountain far away,
Columns swaying in November wind;
Why come and stare closer at the eyes .
Of Grecian dead--windblown fountainhead?
Stand before the window far away,
Where you have known the supplicant vision,
Never to enter unmasked, alone.
Never come to ponder the metaphor of the hand,
To press and feel the imprest heart.
The Litany of rush hour passes, evening dims the eyes.
Narcissus, Is it you or windowglass that hides
The softening face, the softening eyes?
And we know so well, tomorrow;
Tomorrow life will begin.

OBITUARY

The phone rings--someone is dead.
The old man clucks, asks
'Who was he?'--and takes notes.
The tower chimes four,
And there is snow in the sky.

Yesterday I watched

The silent birds eating in the snow;
Last night I walked out to the road
And sleeping birds flew from the trees
Into the silence of tons of snow.

Who was he?—Who wants to know?

My dead are carried off to silent rooms,
White rooms with no seams, no corners;
I helped to build them with my laughter.

I listen to the mill of illusions
We built to grind us away
To white powder; to snowflakes,
Grind silently away—
In answer to yours of this morning,
Here is mine of tonight:
I wish to abdicate.

SPEECHLESS

Who lies down at your side, child,
When darkness hides all but dreams?

We wait,
Watching you sleep,
Scarcely moving on the pillow
And hear,
From the soul of your dreams,
'Are you there?'

And wonder
Who is your tormentor?
Why?

Tomorrow I feel again your bites,
Your kicks, the look of wild eyes
And know that love, sometimes,
Does not suffice.

How, though, can we watch you grow
Into Silence? Build walls
Because no one knows?

You stare—dumb—
Waiting for each retreat.
What do you know?
What do you see?

Tomorrow
bring again
your leaves
your stones
The wonderment of your eyes.

I take your gifts and,
Like you, am dumb—
can only nod.

MITCH ZATTO

BITTER BRANDY

In the cinderblock search for truth
the storm winds of wasted years
alternating currents of destruction
sorrow is formulated
 neon-lit corridors collapse.
foggy mornings promise nothing.
the beacon of yesterday
tormented by seasalt
cherished by some crazed keeper
 gives the weary no direction
a loud cry! a heavy wave crashes, pays
no respect
 a quick change of scene . . .
 yet all remains.
and yet, satan
with his continental stare
disappears into the crowded
market place of time
 the aroma of fruit
 apples, pumpkin, berries
frustration chokes like bitter brandy
laugh so loud! the darkness
affords such a haunting forgiveness
but the mirror amplifies desolation.

CATARACT

Although a little Carolina wren,
Cold-puffed and tail erect,
Flits now
Just outside our casement window,
I hardly see it.
My mind is filled instead
With a frail and distant
Salt and pepper headed lady
Brooding in the paneled shadow
Of her parlor
Over misty, blue-screened fragments
That dance vague patterns
Refined only by their sound
And her fancy.
I see she only half watches too,
Distracted by the
Insistent dullness
Of an empty sense.
(A milky lens
Has slowly weaned her
From the sweetness of vision,
Its whispering mist
Relentlessly drifting
Into the humor of her eye,
Clouding every gentle image
With apprehension.)
A lone overnight bag
Sits in a chair by the door.
When she goes,
Perhaps she will strain
To etch into her memory
The bright hot dog
And used car colors
That blur by her eyes,
Along with the faces of her family,
Trailed out in laminated history
From the wallet in her lap.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Sometimes when I'm bored
I read my chenille bedspread
like a blind man reads braille,
or let my toes mull the dogmas
of ancient pebbles, who
in their lifetimes
have known a thousand shoeless feet.
Sometimes I bury my face
in the moist lap of the sky
and find company there,
a box of blackbird raisins
milking glass wool clouds
with feathered swoops.
Sometimes I lie as still
as bark upon a tree
and fearfully think
that if God
ever walked up to me on the street
I would not recognize Him,
and be speechless.

FUSION

The sky drips down into the sea
And no horizon marks just when
The twilight ball of sun becomes
A ruby-water denizen.

And who knows when stripes of sun
That ribbon from sky to ship,
Float merrily upon the wind
Or lie upon a high wave-tip!

Whitecaps join hands with gay white clouds
To dance away an afternoon,
And on a sparkling summer night
The laughing waves splash up the moon.

POEM NO. 5

Yellow on a lace afternoon—
someday I'll go to find the field
we used to know.
And pass by the brown fences that float after you.
I'll follow the roads that took us
to the world
we can reach again
never

TIME WORN FIELDS

he tromps
around in
various time worn fields
kicking up
great clouds
of mind manure
constantly struggling to
make us eat
his moldy coleslaw concepts
we all need a good vomit

NOCTURNE

blue flowering wine bottle
in oils you travel
where i walk barefoot in
my soul
you play your guitar
and lay paper flowers
on a windsong of cold incense,
blackly burning
your eyes are hooded fire that
hiding among gray mists
open your heart like a
morning glory in
the sun.

WATERLILY

The whitened waterlily
Resting in the satinpleasuresmoothness
Of the silent lake

WINTER'S FESTIVE PROMISE

The woods are thin,
No colors
Quickened the maples;
Late winter's festive promise
Lingers in the air.

DAN BROWN

LOVE IS NOT BLIND

And at the end of the letter
Sincerely Yours
How long will it take
Till
Sincerely Yours
Turns to
With all my love
Like so many
Before
We both work
Unknowingly
At first to ourselves
Then to each other
Till
We both know
Love grows
It shows too
But we are blind
We both
Try to say
But talk
About
Something else
Barriers slowly break
Blindness fades
One day
We see
Sincerely Yours
Turn to
With all my love

A TRIP

A jump off a high cliff
Into complete blackness
A long fall
With patches
Of warmth and cold
In the darkness
As I fall down
And up
Blown by
Unfelt currents
I see
Color crystals
Walpurgis night dream scenes
Spin and talk
And dissolve again
Finally I land
So softly
That I do not know
The fall is over
I lie down and drift
Into sleep
Awakening the next morning
To find myself
On top of a cliff
Staring into complete blackness

ON THE OCCASION OF MEETING
MY 7TH GRADE MATH TEACHER

Today I met a ghost;
a reflection of the past.
We exchanged polite amenities.

I fidgeted with the knowledge,
That no longer was I the person
That ghost had once known.
That creature, now, is a ghost.

Perhaps both the ghosts
Fidget a little as well.

A NEW SOUND

Before our meeting
My ears had never dreamt of
The song of the swan

A THOUGHT

Somewhere
From
The blue neon sea
That is hidden
In my mind
Came vague echoing
Horn in the fog
Vibration
A calling
From a lost land
A memory
Of you

SELLING STARS

There's a woman outside the theater with a pushcart.
She's ragged and a liar. She's selling stars
Surreptitiously. Usher and doorman come out,
One brisk man to each bony cracked elbow, to
Hoist her up—she's screaming, 'Mongrels! Star haters!'
Her eggshell voice breaks in rivulets on the air.
Dog-lean, she rattles. 'I have the stars
And the science to heal you. I've never been prolific
But I've got guts. I can't help being
A wallflower.' There are tears in her eyes. She is ninety years old.

For twenty of those years she's been careful,
Slyly pinning dirty stars on people's backs.
Now she's a sputtering gutter heap and
It's cold and
A crowd doesn't gather.

WATCHING THE GEESE FLY OVER THE ISLAND

They are the world's breath. They are a whistling vine
across the taut gray sky.
They are distant, and the wings are endless.
And their high loon cries
drop to the marshes, cold and shimmering.
They are not separate; their track in the air is a noiseless purposeful
pulse in time with the stirring trees and the hidden
wind and the water's undertow.
Our eyes had almost dropped, aimless, to the simmering sea when we
heard them on their way—
And we turned our faces up and followed them, longing, feeling the earth
a cage, held captive
by the high wide sky.

LINDA MARTELLA

NEVER DID I LIKE RAIN . . .

Never did I like rain
That came with broken twigs
And dead leaves and
Desolate window scenes.
Never did I see any beauty
In darkness, in destruction.
Brown earth left
Brown drinks for dying things.
Never did I find so much. . .
After rain.

PET SHOP SPECIAL

*HEAR THE SINGING PARAKEET
COME IN BEFORE WE CLOSE OR
SOMEBODY BUYS THE BIRD.*

They've taught a parakeet locked in a cage
to sing he is a new famed star . . .
a singing sensation only
costs half a dollar to hear
the oviporous article

I heard a red-breasted robin outside my door
singing in the birch this morning.

PEAGS

Peags
millions running stampeding
crushing everything in their way.
Forever hungry slobs—hungry
for scraps of everyone else's selves.
Peags fattening
eating the land of the lives that came before them.

Rolling romping in the mud run waters
saved in the ditches for the thirsty—
ditches made by sinking slime and years of time.
Made for the dirtiest the peaggiest
the biggest heavy-weights of the races.
Peags beating chasing
crushing everything
I never saw a Peag smile.

MIKE McLAUGHLIN

NOT

not too many people
ever hit me straight
but when they did
it kinda rolled me over
not too many speeches
ever came out of the mind
more than the paper
on which they were written
and from my side it's kinda strange
don't you have the time
or is it the nerve you lack
your own ego impresses no one
but always scares you
and makes you fear others
and what you have become
you ought to jump
into a wagon trip
someplace where your disgrace
can't be read
where your past would be hidden
or don't you want to run
the pipe dreams you had
are all smoked out
who will be the next herb
to fill the bowl
so you can O D on another person's pride
once upon a time
somebody said you were born
gave you a name and sex
now your sex gives you another name
but four letter words should be easy to remember
even for you
you've eaten so many people alive

that you are fat with their souls
but you always set the bathroom scale
back
so you won't notice their weight
you never were one
who enjoyed anyone's company more than your own

MUCH AS I

Remember the fantasies we once knew
the times when time was our fancy
and the night, our reward
when we loved we could
see ourselves stop and
dream into each others arms
awaiting morning—
soon to be something very distant—
to be one united again

then the sunset will
through you find me
and i her
then you will realize as i
have before that
it is better to accept persistence
as a sign of devotion
much as i was once devoted to you

E. J. DUFFY

THE FLIGHT OF THE UNICORN

I

Fly from the hunters fair unicorn!
Fly with the wind that whispers morn.
'Scape from the shafts that seek your side—
'Scape from the bolts—let the wind provide!

II

See you no safety on either tall flank?
See you no refuge in forest so dank?
Terror and trembling—the horn and the howl—
The passions of chase. Where go you now?

III

Yonder a brook! With a leap you may bound!
Flee to it quickly over briary ground.
Through field and through thicket, and meadow of green,
They follow the breath of your wee lungs let lean.

IV

Above—see, a storm breaks in heavens' endeavor!
A downpour would drench you—your scent softly sever. . . ,
Alas, there's a drop! There's a trickle—a splash!
Ah, the glorious thunder! The torn-twisted flash!

V

All the flights loose their branches,
The ferns droop with damp—
But—Onward, with fear, pray the hunters encamp!
Still, the dawn is three circles, diameters drawn—
Yet—Onward, you dizzily dread them un-gone.

VI

Rest now. For rest comes with 'laxing of lash.
Rest. . . it's a league 'least 'tween you and their clash.
Catch now your brawn and your breath 'neath yon bud. . . ,
Sleep lightly—sleep quickly—your fleece flouts the flood.

VII

AWAKEN! ARISE! The horn haunts the hill!
The challenge and chanting again sound your ill!
The dawn is damp-foggy over forest and foe. . . ,
Perhaps it conceals you. . . ,
Yet, I dread when you go.

THE FAIRY WONDERFUL MAIDEN

time once upon a long ago
stood still
for grumpy-the-favorite of the
fairy-wonderful-maiden
when she asked him
how he'd like
a bite of her apple
as the story goes
though
(rather sadly too)
the hex was on
and the moment
became a grumpy eternity
the other dwarfs
feasted it all
in star sprinkled mead
and the proverbial
dewdrop ambrosia
reserved by all the impulses
in the cosmos
for the little people
much to the consternation
of the real
(or illusory)
world
the fairy-wonderful-maiden
whom an insatiable lust
for revenge
drove to extremes
of nervous titillation
connived and danced conniptions
behind her one-way mirror
watching the little mothers
get stoned
out of their minds
awaiting
with excruciatingly pleasurable pain
(she loved
every agonizing throb)
the momentary demise

of the repugnant
dwarted elves
well
it occurred soon enough
and the fairy-wonderful-maiden
raced shriekingly
out from behind
her one way mirror
tearing at her bosom
in ecstasy
and stamped
thrice
on the head of each dwarf
finally
in a swoon
the like of which
adorns all
fairy-wonderful-tales
the fairy-wonderful-maiden
dropped
in an ugly pile
from which soon
could be seen
rising
the wispy vapors
of a groovy dream
in which she
saw herself carried off
on the end of
the black knight's
lance

THOMAS P. MACALUSO

NO SILKEN TENT
(WITH APOLOGIES TO R. FROST)

His life had known no silken tent;
It felt instead a muslin shroud
Whose guy lines stitched still, ashen eyes
And palled each of his live dreams.
No desert wind threw pennant up,
Nor billowed striped walls lustily.

Still— a shroud provides one refuge:
Retreat, not love's sanctuary;
A hermitage, no love's balm

SARAH BOOGY

FOR MY FATHER

The idea of defiance
was pure anathema
to you
You told me I was a prize
how proud you are of me
with relatives and a few drinks
Did you really mean it
and how impressed were they anyway

Alone,
you abhor me
I've known it
You've counted me
among the five reasons
for your death in life

What can I say
except
'I never asked to be born,'
and that I,
the good for nothing,
Thumbsucking
child of your scorn,
am leaving

RON DAVELER

AND DIDN'T WE

and didn't we make love in the desert sun,
in the trees and on hills,
by the wild wind-blown oklahoma lakes and prairies,
on the sides of highways,
and in the homes of strangers.

MERCELON FREEN

BALLOON

moving up, around,
and backwards
awesome balloons emerge
from the abyss and
ease themselves into swirling
clouds of vapor.

floating,
lighter than air,
they burst into space
where they spin, dazedly,
amid flashes of light,
resonating between sound waves,
forever.

LUNAR BILL MOONEY AND BOYD MAITS

THERE'S AN ELEPHANT IN YOUR BEDROOM, DEAR

The bathroom door is open and the light is on
showers running but there's no one inside,
the fig tree in the corner by the bureau
is desperately trying to hide,
the rock group's playing 'Gloria' on the floor below us
as the lead banana does his monkey ride,
the flutist's notes are coming through the ceiling
the orgasmist has struck a note and died.
A bullfight is blaring from the telly
shucks! the matador's just been gored,
the opium den above us is being raided
and the weirdo is torturing mice next door. . .
There's an elephant in your bedroom, dear
it won't go away despite how I've tried,
there's an elephant in your bedroom, dear
it says we're going to the void and it's our guide.

CHESTS OF KEYS

She walked through the mist and through the haze
shadows of dark then filled my gaze
gardens of fog came and gone
i just flew until the dawn.
chests of keys with hidden locks
stumbled until they hit a rock
the blood that came was golden green
i was trapped and i was free.
i turned towards the sun and it was gone
a nearby bird said turn me on
water that tasted like champagne
i wondered if i was still sane.
i fell into a mat of pubic hair
it reminded me of a penguin's lair
the ground was like a drill machine
and my ear bounced on a trampoline.
reflections of a Mister Hyde
round trip on his airplane ride
no crash for a plane that never flew
good fortune that i never bid adieu.

THE BRIMSTONE BUNCH

The coffin opens and the hinges creak
blackness fills the open cask
cobwebs flutter to the ground
the living dead begin their task.
Goodness fear the zombie claw
satan's men will eat you raw
livers are a special treat
brains are tasty and so are feet.
So beware—bide my warning all
or they'll be scraping you off the wall.

Commit a sin to save yourself
hang onto your face
devil's children consume
anyone living in grace
Shoot your neighbor and you'll be saved
choke a kitten—anything depraved!
Get in good with the brimstone bunch
take a mutant out to lunch.



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