

STILL LIFE IN MOTION

By

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STILL LIFE IN MOTION

The eye that descries

a sinless unsaver
of things discovered.

Memory
the sinner.

Heraclitus took
no snapshots

no graven images
of a gone world.

Memory the retriever

an album
filled with photographs:

tail fins
of a diving humpback

ocean waves
crashing on a headland

wild geese
beside a woodland stream.

The poet to be
an enscriber

of moving images

a world made still
yet still in motion

moving with the words
across the page.

To descry
To discover

but not to clutch

to reveal
but not to retrieve.

Words on the wind

still life in motion.

SONNET TO BASHO

Cuckoo's call at dusk
cherry blossoms in the wind
songs that come and go
at day's end.

Summer grass
risen in fields
where warriors once fought.
Waving blades catch teardrops.

After the jump
into the rippling pond:
small sound, mighty echo.

Warrior turned poet
over withered fields
he wanders still.

HAIKU PENTIMENTOS

Bright huge moon
in a swirling starry sky

Van Gogh's eye.

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Gilded images
on a billion silver screens

dream of Eden's distant gleam.

-3-

Mystic scents
of the shining path

wood smoke and sunwarmed pine.

SAINT ISSA AT LADAKH

Karakoram

faintly pink
in a cold spring dawn

water frozen
in monastery fountains.

Tracing characters

in the snow
on a fountain's surface

the old monk stared gravely
at his guest.

Still dark from a distant desert

the visitor likewise
made a tracing

in the snow.

Together they stared
at ancient characters

once written
in the rigid flesh

and white-fired minds

of prophets..

The old monk

broke the icy surface.
with his fist.

Arms immersed
in frigid liquid

the monk smiled

and laughed

streams of water
running down his upraised arms.

When the surface
of the fountain

grew calm

the man of the desert
stared into the quiet pool

now dark and still.

Seeing no reflection

he smiled

and laughed.

VALEDICTION IN D MAJOR

In failing painter's light

gilded leaves afloat
on a river of crimson and white.

Nine chimes toll
for their voyage

toward a dark unfathomed night..

BOSS GODFREY

(The walking boss in the Paul Newman film, *Cool Hand Luke*)

He stares straight on
toward an unseen horizon
silvered glasses agleam
with late afternoon sun.

He walks slowly
in measured steps
the limp setting a rhythm
to his gait
the only rhythm he knows
or remembers

When he calls for the rifle
he smiles slightly
and quickly
before his face resumes
its stolid mask.

The day's work is almost done
convict crews sweating
grunting softly
near exhaustion
in the heat.
of a Southern summer.

At the end of the shift
rifle cocked on his hip
he stands and watches
while the trucks fill up
with weary men.

Later

in the humid twilight

he sits on his porch

smiling slightly again

remembering the swift clean shot

that sealed a silent compact
with a rabbit-blooded loser.

Lizard perched on a branch

as still as death
it stares at its prey.

Moth flutters up and down

dancing in the day's last light

before the swift clean strike
that leads to final darkness.

Walking boss smiles.

Just for a second

ice-blue eyes
flare up

against the coming night..

VANISHING ELYSIUMS

Out of the ageless, borderless deep

they breach the surface
in tandem leaps

taking the air and the light
with no land in sight

no distant beach heads
to tempt them.

They have no memory
of fateful arrivals

on foreign soils.

If they know of the follies
of land-bound brethren

they give no sign.

Cetacean gliders sing

in the dark Eden
below the waves

their songs resound
in eerie sonic sweeps.

Do they mourn
impaled and butchered ancestors

have they a memory of harpoons
and the fierce proud shouts

of those who made an art

of holy slaughter?

Do they spoil for retribution
or dream of acts of terror

to be wrought upon the guilty

and the innocent?

They give no sign of that.

They only sing
and sometimes leap

taking the air and the light

before they plunge again
into thalassal rapture.

There are so many songs
in the ocean's eternal night

so many calls to brothers and sisters

so many songs sung
across the ageless, borderless deep.

Here among the land-bound tribes

shadows fall against the towers
and the thrones

the darkness is not charmed

the air is heavy
with old enmities

and the worn and rutted earth
has a terrible memory

of pressed flowers and dried blood.

Anthems and banners rise
amidst the upraised arms

and clenched fists

of those made hostage
to crescent, cross or star

of those who bear

the dread weight
of dear delusion

the dead freight

of fear and illusion.

Out of many mouths

comes the zealot's timeless cry:

*Dulce et decorum
est pro patria mori!*

The legions stand
under crescent, cross or star

and even the most sober of them

suffer under the spell
of Faustian magicians

or quixotic madmen.

But kingdoms will not come
and the brave and craven

both will fall

with dying angry eyes

that find no promised mansions
in the distant silent skies.

Each becomes a prophet
in his death

but there is nothing to tell
nothing to lament

and nothing to forgive.

There is only a sudden fathoming

of transparency

and rapture.

Far out from burning towers
and ruined thrones

out where the tides run deep

and the old songs are still sung

the leapers breach the surface
taking the air and the light

before they plunge again

into the depths

of Heaven.