

*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.

-2-

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.