

Autumnal Bathers

In the urban living-room,
Enjoying the skylight
Secretly,
Dreary from the lingering evening,
Curled fetusly
On the landscaped carpetry,
A few sleep unnoticed
To the passerby
And those resting on the benches
Sipping their coffee—
Sultry Sunday.

Scurrying, and flapping
Are the pets—
The paws, and the plumage—
Not aware of the time
Only conscious of the season
While collecting their hoards:
Going for their room and boards.

Potpourri—
The leaves
Mulching, turning
Into spice, into earth,
Refreshing the air.
(How Square! ¹)

Gingerly the bark peels
Upon hearing the squeals
Of children skimping,
Little elves scampering,
Collecting cones to
Place on their shelves.

Conversing are the adults
Sharing their results
Of the last time,
Remembering some,
When they bathed in autumn.

¹ Rittenhouse Square, Philadelphia, PA

Grubby, Little Squirrel

One Sunday,
Sitting in the park,
Eating my favorite, lemon blueberry,
Watching the people waltz by,
A squirrel snuck up and stood beside me
On the bench eyeing my muffin!

I placed a piece in my mouth
Pretending not to notice.
"Oh, look," exclaimed a waltzer. "It's Grubby!"
I waived to the waltzer reassuringly like a dummy.
Grinning knowingly, "Good luck," Waltzer proclaimed.

Grubby,
Who had been ignoring his fans,
Leaned forward— not flinching, nor twitching.
"Eeah," I shouted at the interloper.
Ignored me he did stepping, stepping even closer.

Now he began to shadow box before me.
I shoved a blueberry in his mouth to get things over,
And still he stared at the muffin, so I offered willfully.
He ate the rest leaving the wrapper for me to discard.
"Ingrate," I mumbled. "Soon you'll be a fat, obese lard."

I left waltzing, realizing
Now no longer a crime is it to feed an animal—
Especially something as cute as a grubby, little squirrel.

At the LOVE Park¹

They jammed to the boom of their urban drums
And rapped viciously about their urban contemporaries.
One almost pulled his gun.

Two trail-bike dancers and a roller-skater
Weaved to the urban beat
Unwilling to break their neck or bust their butt.

There weren't any Sunday drivers,
Just these urban entertainment providers.

Urban drums, urban beat,
Urban contemporary,
Urban entertainment,
Urban LOVE, urban park.

¹ The LOVE sculpture at Kennedy Plaza, Philadelphia, PA

The Goat, the Giant Frog, the Lion and the Snake

I

Erected tail,
Furled spine,
Protruding ears,
Alerted horns
Advance in his gruffed temperament.

How peculiar is this ogreish billy
Who stamps his hooves belligerently
And wrinkles his nose braying whimperingly.

His collar,
Hand-crafted leather,
Is almost hidden by
His sophomoric goatee.

The rope,
Lost beneath the matured grass,
Has been through and through gnawed
As he is there still by-and-by.

Such a brazen dedication
To the Square¹
Could have only been presented by
Goaded colleagues who have finally had the last,
"Nay!"

II

Cornellie,²
Perched on granite,
Overlooking the lilies,

Legs,
Lean,
Prime for leaping–

Back,
Forked,
Tense from sitting–

Awaits little bugs,
Never blinking
Her bulging eyes:

French curled tongue
Within resting patiently
To lash out in order to fill her famished belly.

III

The Manic Depressor,
At the serpent, snarling,
Paws the constrictor–
His lordliness displaying.

Bound is the voluptuous boa
Fleeing not into fear;
Beaming is the merciless boas
Fighting spitefully. My dear!

What a farce, carnivorous,
For a sculpture, ominous,
To make the statement, supercilious,
For reasons so romantically stupendous.

¹ Rittenhouse Square, Philadelphia, PA

² Cornelia van A. Chapin, sculptor

A Lazy Afternoon in the Square¹

I dare ever to go shoeless in the city!

However, this afternoon is too perfect,
And I didn't have to listen to the weather
Report to tell me that the season is spring.

My feet breathe in the air. How happy
My toes are to wriggle in the sun instead
Of being cramped so heavily upon the sole.

Breathe. Breathe, breathe my feet,
Because you certainly do stink!

¹ Rittenhouse Square, Philadelphia, PA

The Duck Girl¹

Marietta,²
Breast exposed—
Under her arm ,
A duck wriggling beside
Her covered one—
Steadfast in her motion,
Retrieved

The wild duck, who
Honks and squawks
Only able to move his neck
While clapping the vapid air with his bill.

Where are these two going—
Her smile as deathly as the look in his eye.
Has she found the daily plumage for the supper table?
Full of zest is the breast, and so of the duck
On the brink of a fulfilling, redundantly stuffing evening.

And so are the mothers in the park—
Clipping their son's angel wings,
Supervising—
Having once revealed their bosom
Offering life, milk suckling.

As so, now we have been weaned.
Now as wild as the duck
We look for a Marietta
To embrace us,
To love us,
To put us
Up for sacrifice.

¹ Sculpted by Paul Manship, Rittenhouse Square, 1911

² Manship's favorite model.

By the Delaware¹

Chilly as a yawn's shudder
The exhale encapsulates
The after-hour solemnity— .

Overhead the lights descend
As the undercurrent tows in
The sigh— .

By the Delaware
Life in the city
Could not be more
Comforting— .

¹ Penns Landing, Philadelphia, PA

THE HOUR PASSES, FRIENDSHIP ABIDES

A Tribute to Evelyn Taylor Price¹

With buttocks clenched
Two young ones
Adjust the dial

With hours passed
Their copper-toned skin
Weather beaten

I watched them
In raptured effort
Enraptured in time

For something
So futile
Friendship does abide.

¹ Sundial, Rittenhouse Square, Philadelphia, PA

Central Park Spring¹

The glistening water ripples
As the breeze hums through
The willows like a woodwind.

Delightfully, ducks wade next to
A demure island decorated by
Defecating domestics.

Yonder is an overpass with ivy
Passing under as the sparrows,
Within the trees, call home the sun.

¹ Central Park, New York City

PARK PATHS

are like epitaphs
for those
who have been
and now are.

CITY SQUALLS

On a dark and burly evening
The streets are somewhat deceiving.
So was the case when Drella¹
Set out for a flavorful fellah.

Flurries were forecasted.
'Twas fine for a frolic in uptown utopia;
However, she was unprepared
For this travesty cornucopia.

A fantastic gale
Filled Drella's dress like a sail.
What was a mere flaccid flurry
Crystallized into a sandblasting scurry:

Piercing angelic, dust diamonds;
Wincing hysteric, crushed almonds.
Frenzy. Lost for words and wherewithal.
Rationale for nought in this city squall.

A pump flying to the left; another right.
One second you saw her; the next, out of sight.
Of course, obviously, she slipped;
More ostentatiously, Drella disastrously dipped.

A taxi, farced fashionably,
Sped over her foot wantonly.
If Drella were obese, this story would be over
Because she sang with such operatic fervor.

A charmer came from the left; another from the right.
Each approached with a pump and brought it to her sight.
Drella asked, "Did either of you get the license plate?"
"Sorry," said the left charmer, "but how about a date?"

"My foot! My foot!
That damn cab ran over my foot!!!"
"Don't worry," instructed the right charmer. He whistled
And the taxi immediately returned.

"Where to," asked the cabby.
"Did you run over this woman's foot?"
(Prosecution pending.)
"Screw you," exclaimed the cabby speeding
Off, searching for other roving majesties.

"Get me an ambulance,"
Cried Drella as if to herself--
A marveling circumstance
As the hour struck twelve.

So, don't be fooled on a dark and burly evening
When the streets are somewhat deceiving.
Stay where you are
And pretend such tragedies only happen to a pop star.

¹ The nickname given to pop artist Andy Warhol.
Singer Lou Reed popularized the nickname
"Drella," after Warhol's death.

A Public Waste Receptacle

A lone
Garbage bag,
Whose only support
Is a steel whicker basket,
Waits to be refused.

The Last Night I Dreamt of the Bogeyman

A twenty-three hour day of
 Posting and pitching– the after effects of
 Eating, drinking and sleeping– and
 Overwhelmed by the others' eating and drinking, I feared
 I might not be able to find my way to sleeping.

Preferring not to travel the grave distance with a migraine,
 Or walk the street until dusk
 With the nocturnally arcane, I asked a newfound
 Friend¹ if I might become bedridden at his abode.

"Briefly," he bellowed.

Unfamiliar with my familiarity,
 I got into the cab with my fellow bellower
 And thought of my room, my bedroom
 In my home: wrought slovenly; aesthetically.

I wanted to step upon my mound of clothes
 And newspaper, stub my toe on my own sneaker;
 I wanted my stench, my fumes, to perforate my soul.
 For I know not what I might upon step, not
 What my toe would stub, nor how my soul be
 Punctured.

How might I seep into this sorcery?

We exited the cab, entered a building and boarded
 An elevating vessel whose interior was florescent blue
 Which had a small porthole.

As we ascended secretly,
 Silent speech oscillated between us
 As the pit of my stomach sank slowly.

Had I gone too far?

The elevator door opened into the apartment, into
 A blank-faced computer, books, stacks of paper; a studio,²
 Space, paintings, sculpture; words– words
 Undefined, de-defined, neo-defined– pop burst
 My bubble as I searched for the largest
 Kitsch-n-knife when I heard
 A machine talk in messages from the past,
 From the dead in time.

The host, from somewhere, appeared
 With a quilt and pillow in hand, showed me
 A room, a mini-loft, where I was to sleep,
 And closed the door closing in the temperament.

I took off my glasses, shoes, shirt and pants,
Turned out the light, fumbled into bed and passed-
Out before I could fumble myself.

As I lie there with mouth gaping, snoring perhaps, not
Aware of my bovinity, my feet began to tingle; they
Began to burn as they sweat.

My eyes opened to darkness– not sure
If the room was in total– for I was not
Wearing my glasses.

I groped down my body until I reached by toes,
Removed the socks, then returned to my outing.

My body, as it lie dormant, was inside my spirit;
My skin and bones, lifeless, engulfed in solitude,
Floated to the nadir.

My back, firmly against nothing,
Forced downward my head, arms as well as
My legs; I could not move: constricted.

I heard hectic, melodic, frantic, rhythmic, lachrymose laughter.
What matter?!

Further and further my empty corpse
Sank.
Fireworks flashed before my eyes.
Hell.

And my spirit watched its physical mass plummet
Into depth, but where was I?

I who was; I who am.
Am I who I was? Or, was I who I am?

I awakened moments later– bogied.

“GOOD MORNING!!!”

¹ This poem is dedicated to poet Bob Holman.

² The studio of artist Elizabeth Murray.

Utterances in the Night

Half awake in bed, a few moments past the prior day,
Watching the curtains bellow from the passing breeze,
The window ajar, voices speaking drunkese—
Maybe they too found the atmosphere shockingly
Intoxicating— that stuttering yowl language
Which only a best friend can understand,
A designated companion leading an askew buddy
Down or up the street, depending on an internal compass
Bearing, heading for eats, maybe towards home,
Maybe to relieve the soul condemned to the truth,
A wrath so damaging, so damning is reality, so
Difficult to escape except by passing out,
Cannot pass away for then you shall
See the light ripping every last ounce of myth
Out of the mind— half sane/half insane— where
Aloof guided by a ghost or an angel to a
Resting place, not knowing how you arrived,
But there you are, head spinning as the earth,
Motionless by gravitating others involved in
The world as you half say something to,
Yourself, wondering what it is you have said... .

Full of uttering sheep, finally falling asleep.

Knotted Old Oak

When I was a child
My aged grandmother told me,
"That if you frown so frequently,
That if you wrinkled your face,
It will stay that way—
Just like that knotted, old oak;
Just like your grandfather."