

Night Burns

Sad ballerinas dance
in burning fields
all night long,
trying to forget
the people they love.

Writhing in ecstatic trance,
they move in perfect sync,
a gift attained,
from endless nights
of unwanted practice.

All night, all night
they dance—
exposing wounds,
revealing hearts,
provoking disembodied souls
who weep at humanness.

Although no one ever sees,
they dance sensually,
beautifully—
all night,
performing to music
of the forsaken dreamers.

The Storm

Last night I dreamt
we took shelter in a cave,
refugees from a storm—

building a fire,
unexpectedly holding each other gently,
our faces touching wet with rain—

we lay quietly
knowing one another's thoughts,
feeling safe in each other's arms—

as earth thundered
lightning illuminated shadows,
revealing ancient symbols,

and we secretly hoped,
the storm would last all day.

1000 Shades of Gray

I awoke this morning
to a thousand shades
all the color of gray—
and remembered a day
just like today
where within the realm
of dreamy clouds quietly thundering,
my wounded mother
tenderly embraced,
a frightened little boy.

Staring unsighted,
into dormant rolling skies,
somehow, forgotten memories
have found their way home—
the chaotic haze
gracefully revealing a moment,
me finally knowing,
she did all she could,
the best she could—
and that love isn't black,
nor is it white—
but a thousand shades,
all the color of gray.

The Cranes

One by one,
baffled mourners did drift
back toward fragile sanctuaries,
leaving her alone
to gaze the abyss
of freshly churned earth
where the once beautiful body lay
beginning the slow passage
back to dust.

As she knelt
craving his presence,
Apollo blazed west
meandering to destiny
threatening to leave her alone
in the land of night,
where nocturnal creatures
dwell ominously therein.

But she remained faithful,
still at one with him,
her profound tenderness
causing signs
in the heavenly places,
provoking the servants
to summon the cranes—

to break the veil,
their startling appearance

and poetic laments
letting her know
she was not alone,
giving her strength,
to rise from her knees.

As she drove off
into night –
the cranes followed,
flying around and around—
until the cemetery gates
clung shut behind;
she knowing now
he would be with her,
all the days of her life.

A Place In Summer

Staring out a sullied summer window
amid the misty morning sun,
neighbors intimately gather
on the way to a lake in summer,
a day and night of barbeque, beer,
horseshoes, fireworks, and stories—
funny, stirring, semi-apocryphal tales,
getting more confessional as darkness falls,
while I, washed ashore in a tempest
remain exiled, alone in a container,
caught unexpectedly by July 4th's
bright expectant smile restlessly staring,
isolation's burden too much to bare,
I venture out searching for a place in summer,
Ned Merrill, *The Swimmer*, on a bicycle
sojourning northwest from Ann Arbor,
planning to find home by nightfall,
pedaling on the steamy backroads
of Washtenaw and Livingston counties,
wandering through Dexter, Hudson Mills,
Pinkney, Webster, Half-Moon Lake and Hamburg,
passing fading seasonal ice cream shops,
unkempt orchards obscuring mills,
boarded-up, dreaming of Fall,
corn fields, row-upon-row, knee high by July,
cranking crested weather-vanes atop old Dutch barns,
maple, birch, oak and elm, seasonally adorned,
showing-off summer's finest green,
firethorn and potentilla scattered among hibiscus

blooming in feckless shades of sapphire and rose,
 odd vehicles, adorned in red, white, and blue
 pulling ramshackle floats parading Lady Liberties',
 disputable beauty queens heading for Main Street, America
 pleased they've finally been recognized
 by the ragged small town entourages trailing merrily behind,
 males secretly wondering if they're doing the right thing,
 a proud Grandma beaming at the world's most beautiful princess.

When a weary westbound sun set its heart to dusk,
 I came upon Whitmore Lake and hurriedly peddled
 to quaint cottages hoping to find a place in summer—
 sanctuaries handed down generation to generation,
 with flowering gardens watched over by timeworn gnomes—
 busy-bodies demanding to know your business,
 sun-dials, wind-chimes and blazing grills
 surrounded by arctic colored folk blushing pink,
 partaking in the three-month Michigan ritual,
 reading Cheever and Twain, waiting for night—
 fireworks, more beer, then a midnight slow-dance
 near a lake shimmering white under a giant rising moon,
 a cherished phonograph spinning, *A Summer Place*
 crackling softly through lace curtains fluttering,
 spellbound lovers swirl, one amongst the stars.

When gentle remnants of light,
 consumed by insistent moments of darkness
 overtake Main Street, a clear-felled night
 exposes a stranger, alone,
 among other fragile creatures more sheltered than he—
 wanting to belong, pretending delight

amidst America's greatest summer show,
lost in the exploding rainbow colored mess,
when mercifully, from clearing smoke rising,
an angel, a hospitable summer lake legacy,
gifted, able to feel longing, knowing emptiness—
giving comfort before sending me on my way
with a beer, slap-on-the-back and a prayer for the road,
on the long journey home.