

Stars I Can Not See

Her children dead
A life of weeping
All I could offer
Hot tea with lemon
And only two biscuits

No pleasure in little
Things spoiling in
The hot sun of
Unrelenting grief
No shade either

What could I do
Alone and helpless
Among so many
Stars I can
Not see

Merwin the Presbyterian

on reading his obituary in the NY Times after his death on the ides of March 2019

A reclusive Buddhist hiding
On a paradise-orchid island
Knowing no self-respecting
Calvinist allows a glimpse of
Pleasure much less a delight
In sight, taste, sound, or smell

Without that stern self-denial
He planted his own garden
Complete with trees of pleasure
Ate the first fruits and never
Answered any calls
Avoided any exile

Unlike the bad Burmese monks
He will not return as a scruffy
Dog sniffing around the temple
More likely a dove gliding grace-
fully into his palm trees to rest

D.C.

from the middle of
March until mid-
May, flowers obscure,
the cause for dismay.

At the Lake

Summers at the lake we sat and watched
The birds dip over the water and waited

Occasionally I allowed myself a thought
What would it be like to walk on water

Would I need a special type of footwear
Should I take my clothes off without sunblock

Nothing ever came of these musings except
From time to time you put your arm on my shoulder

Those were the days when I believed myself
To be loved and all the world hung together

Now it is winter and I am alone without you
And where you are and in whose arms

Remain as much a mystery as it did when
I wondered how you could love a klutz like me

As it is bitter cold, the lake solid white
I stare straight ahead and imagine a bird

Flying across the water in search of food left
Next to the ice fisherman's hut in the center

Of the frozen lake where ice is a foot thick
I realize now how easy it is to walk on water.

Flip Flop

On page 606
At the top left
Flip

On page 607
At the top right
Flop

In the compact
O.E.D.
Planned
Designed
Or random chance

Recurring questions
Avoided easily
By claiming them
Unanswerable

More difficult
To act than
To believe

Thoughts hidden
Actions seen