

## Photo-Lyricism

My father had a good eye.  
It was bright blue.  
(Both were of course.)  
He closed the other one and focused  
What love he had for me,  
Briefly,  
Thru the lens of his Leica.

My father had a tender eye.  
The pictures prove it to me now,  
But the shutter's speed  
Was very fast,  
And my child's eyes too slow  
To catch the moments of warmth  
Emitted by this man who loathed  
Most everyone he knew.

Surely also me.

## John Plum Prepares a Leg of Lamb

This is how:

Stab the firm flesh  
A short knife in your hand  
Over and over  
And of course all around.

(Pretend  
No one else has taken this life.)

Then :  
Stick a finger or a thumb  
Into each meaty mouth,  
Stretch the slits wide  
So they're ready  
For stuff you mash in,  
Deep in,  
Deep, deep  
Into these holes.

Green, living parsley's  
The thing  
To stuff in.

**Transfigured Nights** (Some phrases are lifted/altered from the libretto for Handel's Messiah.)

My mother was a singer: She sang ...

She sang through the nights  
Of my gestation-  
Trembling lungs  
Pushing on the fetus.

She sang filtered wet songs,  
Dark and shimmering love songs  
Amniotic transmissions of  
Transcendence.

She sang into my childhood,  
'How beautiful are the feet'  
The words  
Did not seem odd to me...  
A child accepts all strangeness  
From her mother.

She sang ...

She sang thru the walls  
Of my mornings

And she sang  
Into the years  
Of her dying and  
Diminishment

She sang into the bones,  
Of the child waiting  
To be abandoned.

My face  
Never,  
Actually,  
Seen.

My voice  
Never,  
Actually,  
Heard.

She sang altered songs  
That went on,  
And on.

And yet,  
The singer's songs  
Did tell the mystery:  
That we shall be changed,  
Changed, in an instant.

That in our flesh  
We shall see,

That in our flesh  
We shall hear,

That in our flesh  
We shall know

God

## LEGACY FROM A SINGER

Decades later,  
Her furniture detaches from the mover's truck  
As easily as my cat's placentas;  
Each piece attached to vowel sounds,  
Bits of time, fragments  
Of the music shared before she died.

That river of sound pushed me along,  
Supported, bathed the growing girl-child.  
And while I slept, it filtered thru the walls  
Taught my ear to differentiate  
Living sound  
From non-essential eddies

Now arias nest in sofa cushions.  
Obligato lines deflect in part  
Off cane back chairs.  
Whose wooden shapes,  
Smoothed by years of sound  
They please me now.

They somehow fit me too.

## Flowers in Sea Water

The year that I was thirty-five,  
I began to be flummoxed  
By my parents bodies.

First a cousin wrote of need  
To move my mothers grave and  
Asked me where to put her.

I decided to ignore  
What seemed could only be  
Hallucination.

The cousin wrote again - at length,  
Urging quick decision  
On this important matter

Of my mother's body, badly buried  
For more than twenty years,  
Among my father's kin.

At twelve I'd felt  
Somehow responsible that she  
Like me, was separated from her mother.

But now, at thirty-five,  
I didn't want to deal with it!  
Or even to remember where.

The cousin wrote - upset with me,  
Irate, in fact that I would not grow up  
About my mother's body.

So I gave in,  
And went to see an aunt  
Who had not talked to me in years.

And she did name the place,  
And busy cousins did end  
The separation of remains.

Then right away my father died,  
And I brought home  
A gilded fiber-glass container.

My son was young,  
And tactless at that age -  
Refusing to be quiet  
Whenever we saw cemeteries.

For several years it stayed mostly hidden,  
Altho once - alarmingly,  
A helpful person  
Used it as a doorstep.

Finally we took it back abroad,  
To waters he had sailed  
And clearly cared for  
More than any person.

And we -  
The daughter he had used for sex,  
The grand-child he had barely met,  
And one interment-oriented cousin

Sailed out and briefly caused ash,  
And teeth,  
And bone  
To bloom sweetly  
In sea water.