

## CHOOSING AN EASEL

To Aura

Picky and reticent as an anxious, middle-aged bachelor  
considering the merits of taking a wife.  
Reluctant as a farmer to admit the merits  
of a neighbor's prize horse heø about to bid on.  
Like a child told to choose one apple from a heaping bin,  
I debate the virtues of my first easel.  
I measure her girth and compare our height.  
I poke around between her ribs.  
I test her legs until Iø more than satisfied.  
(Once she's mine, theyøll probably poke fun at me  
and say Iø blind.)  
But should she sag heavy to the left  
or wobble knock-kneed to the right,  
should she prove unyielding or fly unexpectedly apart  
after Iøve chosen herí  
should she prove difficult to open upø or spring  
completely loose after I've brought her homeí .  
Or, God forbid, should sheø unexpectedlyø prove ossified  
and inflexible,  
I'll merely wrap her with bows and ribbons,  
and love her forever.

Once she's mine, with wire or twine,  
Iøll bind myself completely to her.  
After allø sheøll have to bear my spills of paintø  
not to mention, many failuresø without complaint.  
Besides, any deluded attraction between us is hardly her fault.

## WAVES IN MOONLIGHT

Old loves have a way of slipping out at night  
to meet where the waters darken,  
letting ancient currents carry and dump them  
into pockets that empty quickly  
beneath rocking spheres that buckle and ache,  
before sending them sleepwalking back over sand  
without ever engaging the desires  
that once bound them.

## DANCING OVER SEASONS

The neighborhood cats know all my steps.  
Yet each time I pass, writing in moonlight,  
they're suddenly startled— seemingly caught off-guard.  
They scamper for improvised safety  
on front porch, doorstep, or brick ledge.  
The way they scowl and hiss,  
you'd think I'd hit a trip wire  
connecting golden leaves and golden fur.

Come to think of it, when I looked back,  
one shook a paw as though shutting off a switch.  
Another darted along, following a line  
that led beneath a rocking chair.  
A third kept watch, staring and studying—  
as if noting this culprit's next move.

Tonight I'dl return and walk the same path.  
With pen in hand, I'dl trace my way back through shadows.  
But should the cowardly inquisitors spring their trap  
or attack my trance,  
I'dl fight back, lunging in a mad dance.  
With notebook in hand, I'dl back them down.

We trespassers must extend ourselves beyond constraints.  
Charge into smoke; blow coals to fire.  
Howl and shake— stroke the flames higher.  
Or draw back,  
stand still— and choking— expire.

ANTHONY'S DRAWING (At age five)

A rocket thrusts into a blue sky  
filled with Jewish stars.  
The lanced moon gushes orange light.  
Red arms enwrap the horizon.  
He's learned his fiery leap  
from his father.  
We catapult together.  
Our bodies crackle in spontaneous scribbles of love.  
We somersault forever on a holiday ,  
clinging to the train cars and tiny cows  
far below us.  
I'm first to parachute.  
I drop from a slit in the womb of night  
and land upside down  
before springing upright to catch him.  
We giggle together in a tight embrace.  
Living this dangerously is so much fun.

## WHEN THEY TORE DOWN THE ABANDONED CHURCH

When they tore down the abandoned church,  
the homeless angels had no place to go.  
Some wandered through the streets.  
Others begged for alms to quell  
the children's whimpers.  
Two sat hunched over like bookends  
cornered in a doorway.  
A toothless angel rocked an orphan  
against her emaciated chest,  
shielding the child from the mad cries  
of her deranged mother.  
Retired from the belfry  
but still flying high  
the free-basing horn player danced around a garbage can  
until he collapsed in the gutter.  
The babbling one who claimed some schooling intoned:  
"I shoot up! I shoot up! I shoot up to feel the sky."  
In a back alley, his sister sold the little she had  
the warmth between her thighs.  
Her scarred face draws disgusted stares.  
But when she walks barefoot with shards embedded  
in her pale feet, her calves still allure.

Oh you who pass the outcasts lining the street,  
you know of the fall that crippled their wings.  
Nourish them.  
They need your words;  
you, their prayers.  
And notice, for once, the basement angels  
whose breath seeps out from beneath damp walls.  
Their imprint will soon grace your headstones  
united beneath a common dust.  
Be aware.