

## The Dock-Sitters

To sit on a dock which has  
walked out on stiff legs  
twelve to fifteen feet away  
from the weedy shore,  
one board after another  
reaching outward, drawing  
your gaze across the unblinking  
eye of the lake whose color  
deepens further out, to sit  
on this dock which seems  
to want to hold you, even  
rock you a little, to dangle  
your feet, whiter in the green  
cool water, to gaze down  
into that silent world where  
minnows eddy around  
your toes, where sand  
has agreed to be shaped  
by ripples of water,  
where reeds and water lilies  
witness to you as that  
which endures. To look out  
on that lake, as birds dip low,  
as quiet men in boats peer  
into the depths, cast  
their lines searching for  
what is shadowy, elusive;  
to lie back on gray, splintery  
sun-warmed boards  
in the silence of light—  
is to allow that tight band  
constricting your breath  
to loosen, is to quench  
your dire thirst for  
the present. To sit  
on such a dock is one  
of the forgotten beatitudes—  
blessed are the dock-sitters,  
for they shall soon feel  
shriven, their humor restored  
and their pant legs  
cool and damp.

## Praying Mantis

Arms folded, wedge-shaped head  
bowed, body, a long thin leaf—  
the praying mantis worships  
in the rosemary bush, nods his head,

asserts how righteous his life is  
as he crunches a cricket whose legs  
still kick going down. He rotates  
his head almost full circle, great

bulbous eyes, hundreds of lenses  
in each because the world is so  
rife with beauty and danger.  
What would it be like to see one

hummingbird swoop down as if  
it were legion, to see the thrust  
of uncountable sharp bills into  
your side as if they were hot blades,

to see your death fly at you  
from every angle, your entire  
vision refracting the jeweled blur  
of a thousand lethal wings.

## **Pigs can see wind**

it is red, say the Irish—  
and we know that  
aborigines hear stars singing.

Those hogs, dainty  
cloven feet in muck,  
lift their heads at dawn  
to gaze with calm eyes  
at red paling to a pink  
swirl above corn fields  
while the Carolinas  
are ravished by  
ninety miles an hour  
of purple and blood red.

And the stars, of course  
they sing—wouldn't you  
if your body was fire,  
lit by an unknown hand,  
seen from afar in a mantle  
of trembling light?

## Waiting in Line After Christmas

What if all things could  
be exchanged equally—

that is, not money  
for things but forgiveness

for a vowel no one has ever  
heard before. What if I

gave you the iridescence  
of the sun on the back

of a mallard and you gave me  
the desire to tap dance again.

Give me your complete  
attention and I'll give you

the scent of mimosa for three  
winter nights. Perhaps,

in plain brown wrapping,  
the postman will bring you

faint chimes from the bells  
Scheherazade wore on her ankles

if you would send back six  
folded prayers. There might be

an exchange center so the grief  
I gave you for the pain

he gave me might be turned in,  
to wait like ice waits for fire, like

stone waits for water  
like never waits for maybe.

## **On Narragansett Bay**

We sail at night  
through warm moist air,  
sails' bellies just full,  
the only sound  
the shush of water  
against hull as we skim  
the edge of the strange  
black world.

The knot meter says  
our progress is slow,  
depth sounder pings  
with warning  
but behind us,  
in the phosphorus wake  
are tiny sea creatures,  
original source  
of energy gone, yet  
buoyant, still bearing  
their frail green light.