

CRESCENDO

It is said when
on his death bed,
Beethoven
lifted his
lion-maned head,
propped himself
on joints
weakened by age,
and though
unable to hear
the thunder
rattling the casements
of those windowpanes,
shook his fists
and pointed
at the sky, glaring
at the lightning outside.
It was almost as if
he meant to chide
God
and His angels
to beware,
for they
were about
to bear
witness
to a new essence,
unhumbled—
and they
would hear him
express an eternal note—
bold and relentless
filled with the rumbling of kettle drums,
a blare of brass.

OEDIPUS REX IN THREE ONE-ACT CINQUAINS

After
answering the
Sphynx's riddle, the young
Oedipus swears he will escape
his fate.

Hubris
overtakes him
as he commits the first
case of road rage on the journey
to Thebes.

Zealous,
his search to learn
the truth reveals that he
killed the king who was also his
father.

PELICANS

Slowly circling,
the pelican

drops like a stone
into water.

Then climbing the
air, he stops, and

with a single
motion of wings,

glides on the wind.

PLAYING BALL IN THE HEREAFTER

As children, Henry Aaron and Don Sutton
grew up in towns three hours apart
and learned the game between fields of cotton;

then the hitter moved east, the pitcher, west
as they took paths to opposite coasts.
Two All-Stars, they became among the best.

Upon dying, Sutton arrived first and may
have use the time to loosen his arm
while warming up on the clay

waiting for Hammering Hank's arrival.
As they play, now in eternal prime,
Celestial fans admire erstwhile rivals

and wonder, from where they sit,
what is the most wonderous display:
the sweet pitch or power-driven hit?

TWO STAIRWAYS

The first greets those who promenade
through the foyer to a sunken

living room; its steps—wide with
carpeted tread—ease beneath gilded panels

lined with portraits of staid patriarchs
long dead. Bright red lips brush fair cheeks,

besitos de cultura alto,
as these elegant guests parade

through the living room past a massive
dining table and walls affixed

with innocuous ceramic buttons,
doorbell fixtures to summon the help

from the kitchen that hides a second staircase:
steep, jagged, and above all concrete.

Servants—rough hands wrapped in skin darker
than the mahogany furniture

they rub to a high shine—trudge between floors
carrying the weight of meals, loads of laundry,

flutes of lemon water, and whispered curses,
triggered by constant buzzing commands.

Meanwhile, quiet worms of hate burrow, deep
yet imperceptible, into their hearts.