

*THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL*

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## **HOPE OF SLEEP**

At first I feel my arms  
go off to rest.  
They loop off the bed's end  
and crawl away, loud  
with relief. The legs  
go next  
and always hunt in pairs.

Only the brain  
is left, tiny  
in the vast bed.

Outside, the elms lean  
into clumps, gossiping  
of violence.  
Somewhere blood leaks out  
from its shocked skin.

Now there's no hope of sleep.  
Under the sheets  
my absent body tingles  
like an amputated toe.

**Larry S. Chengges**

**TWO POEMS****Our Lady of Bedlam**

She is the center of the stage,  
Eve wrapped in pale leaves,  
stained with cherries,  
Madame du Barry, I dare presume,  
Ligeia, Lady Anne or Sylvia,  
gathering bouquets  
of mercury stems  
for an invisible audience,  
delicate as a morning lily,  
her mouth opening,  
a fresh flower,  
yes, a full rose  
wet with icy dew,  
soundless in its blood  
echo, like an old shell  
I used to fondle  
when first learning  
the lies of cold speech,  
wider, much wider,  
in a velvet chasm  
of night, beckoning seeds,  
but the thorns,  
but the sperms,  
the flames in her dry throat  
bite all her songs  
into cauliflower shreds,  
hanging them  
from the hooks  
of her empty mouth  
like dead faggots.

Slips of sail  
in wine-dark bowels,  
    I would mount  
    her and wake  
to Sappho's rocky isle  
    as she pirouettes  
    and sinks in unseen pools,  
crumbling like a hacked  
    weed under me,  
    roots up-ended  
in the sun-blasted sky,  
dirt-clogged and wrecked,  
    she lays under me,  
and I bring black  
soil for her wound,  
    to bury her,  
    to bury her  
in a corner jar,  
    out of sight,  
but the ocean has roared,  
risen from her drooling  
    thighs, yellow  
    as the moon scream,  
and we drown together,  
    are taken down  
    to where the rose's  
burning lips and her  
lily heart are wrapped  
    in coral shrouds.

**By Land and Sea**

Fleshed-in with squarish, bird-grimed stones,  
a man-made parody of a man's blunt finger is  
jammed deep down into the sea's foamy vulva

as I casually, then cautiously move onto a final  
flat rock where the abandoned iron tower stands  
its lonely guard and could, at last, begin

to lose the gray blanket of my flesh in the fog,  
becoming a petrified star tossed in an artificial  
tidal pool, then a squawking mother gull dropping

baby oysters against the mountainous fangs  
until they crack and their own pallid fetuses  
dribble out in broken yolks like broken moons.

I am a rock among rocks, tumbling in the ceaseless  
breakers, in winds of water, but I have already  
learned the rock-rooted value of a stoic

drunkenness and let myself flow in time's flow  
until a sudden lull allows me to scurry away,  
to seek out the selfless cellar of a stone,

though I must protest, and do, a proud armored  
fist shaken in excited defiance. Someday, if human  
hands do not rip me untimely from my second womb,

I will grow huge, survive to swim back to the sea,  
a monster among monsters, slashing at the awesome  
knowledge of some deeper, darker destiny.

The sun burns through the mist and lays a thick  
golden carpet across the massive, moss-green waves  
for me, especially for me, my airy feet,

and I will myself to walk into the rolling heart  
of a distant blizzard, captured by its antique  
world of sculptured ivory maidens flinging their  
cameo forms into the earth's vast cauldron,  
light as lint, frail as moths, white as gulls,  
diving, unseen, into that miracle of breasts.

Sky, sea, the dawn's harsh reef, suddenly all  
reek of sour eternity, the tyranny of mortal scales  
and brittle shells, blood-warm toes gasping for gills.

In all the years since time began to count,  
which I cannot really count, hordes of human  
organisms flourished, faded like matches in the night.

Nameless, faceless, evaporated souls, they drift  
into me across the sea's dying breath like  
tattered infant ghosts, whispers of sails.

As the snails cling to the still rocks below,  
so they cling to me, these barnacles of my mind,  
each time I think of walking water to the sun.

**Edward Butscher**

**HOMAGE TO POINT REYES**

*to Cliff and Effie, who discovered  
this land and brought us here*

down  
down through shafts of sunlight  
plunging wings tucked  
skimming the treetops  
diving toward  
the valley floor

pebbles swell  
into cows

the upcoming fields  
spread

this trim bird the sparrow hawk  
sacred to ancient peoples  
not only has he worsted  
the hostile darkness  
he renews himself daily

the bottomland  
aglow  
the village  
aglow in fog  
the post office  
in a golden light

this is my home this peninsula  
here on the ridge my bed  
my mate  
I am withdrawn  
I say nothing throughout the meal

a glass of water from the tap

this

this peninsula, gentlemen,

once an island

seems another world

in space and time lying

on the San Andreas Fault

it has moved northward

up the coast from Mexico

since Paleocene times hundreds

hundreds of miles

the fault is

a fault is an enormous fracture

The San Andreas Fault is visible

for seven hundred miles Professor Friskie

has discovered a rift

that runs one and one half times

around the globe mostly under the seas

deep incredibly deep it

responsible for the drift of continents

and of continents this fault

most find this

a goodly countrie

with fruitful soyle

stored with many blessings

for the use of man

the sparrow hawk

alights in the pine

a miniature falcon

fierce yet strangely sweet

he has worsted the hostile darkness

it's all right now

I am pulling loose  
 night is over  
 the fog burning off

cows thick  
 on the valley floor

it's milking time  
 a boy gallops  
 bareback out of the barn  
 plunging headlong  
 down through alfalfa  
 the rushing stalks

I am coming apart

in 1579 Francis Drake  
 medium build Christian skin white  
 armd and considerd dangerous  
 saild up this coast  
 pillaging towns and looting ships he  
 sought a Baye faire and good  
 in which to repair his vessel this  
 Pirate was wary of the Indians  
 watching him from the cliff he  
 orderd his band to erect  
 a fortress of stone however  
 and subsequently  
 the Indians enterd the fort  
 with gifts with feathers and beads the  
 chief gave Drake a jerkin  
 of soft leather the English  
 were amazed these Indians  
 were the Coast Miwok Indians  
 of the California coast  
 who lived without a Pattern of Warfare

in Harmonie with the surrounding nations  
and owning with them the land  
in common in the stone edifice they  
sang songs and danced physically  
powerful men the Indians the English  
were awed by their ability  
to run long distances at high speeds  
and to spear fish with great accuracy  
The ship physician observed that as they  
broyled these Fish over the Flame  
they took good heed that they  
bee not burnt the women  
wore a skirt of bulrushes  
covering that which nature  
teaches should be hidden  
smiling the chief settled  
a crown of feathers and shells  
upon the head of Francis Drake this  
act was interpreted  
by Drake as yielding up  
the right and title  
of the land to him

sunlight pours into the valley  
as from a pitcher spout  
a flock of doves  
wheels round the pine  
the settled doves bob violently  
as the newcomer alights  
and makes the branchtip  
thrash

it was  
some years back  
an October day

a young man and woman  
 newcomers to town on foot  
 the lame dog  
 her pet since childhood  
 did not go the distance  
 was too great he she  
 their arms laden with groceries  
 returned along the estuary  
 among blackberry bushes heavily bearing  
 the amazing flowers swayd  
 shoulderhigh and tingled  
 with the musick of the harpsicord  
 they passt a man out there who

after the meal  
 I go to the other room  
 and shut the door  
 I lie face down  
 I am trying to crawl  
 out of my body

the pain the bewilderment  
 I need a doctor

In 1595  
 hardbitten Captain Cermeño crew  
 near mutiny wreckd and  
 abandoning his oriental cargo  
 the sailors close to starvation  
 ate the dog would have  
 eaten each other had not a  
 thereafter the Indians  
 these were the Coast Miwok Indians  
 who lived without pattern  
 thereafter slept on silk  
 and ate their acorn meal  
 from Ming porcelain

