

“I’m Just...”

“Leaf”

I’m just a leaf
growing on a tree
Now it is my belief
there may be others much like me

I don’t possess the gift of sight
which means I’ll never see
Still I love it when the light
is shining down on me

I don’t have any ears
I cannot hear a sound
My dreams often cause me fears
one day I will fall to the ground

Perhaps it’s other leaves I feel
when the wind begins to blow
but as far as what is real
I have no good way to know

“Rose”

I’m just a rose
and I have been for a time
I’m not really much for prose
I prefer words that tend to rhyme

No, I wasn’t born
I came up from a seed
Watch out for my thorn
It could cause you to bleed

I do have petals too
Not like those on a bike
If I am gifted to you
I think surely you will like

My stem it has been cut
Now I’m sitting in a vase
I asked eleven others what
they think about this place

They all said that it’s great
but good things don’t last too long
Now the hour’s growing late
Guess that’s the end of my song

“Cancer”

I’m just a cancer
I bring great misery
I hear wishes for an answer
to rid the world of me

Once I show up uninvited
it often is to stay
though I know they’d be delighted
if I’d simply go away

It’s now the month of June
and I’ve made things pretty bleak
It seems no one is immune
to the havoc I can wreak

Sometimes they hit me with these things
that hurt themselves as well
To whom more consequence it brings
I guess only time will tell

Some turn to nutrition
and a healthier lifestyle
I like seizing their ambition
to try it for a while

Some say there is a cure
that’s been suppressed for years
Until they know of one for sure
I will thrive on causing tears

“Laundry”

I am just some laundry
I’m perpetual in form
I can seem like quite a quandary
Sometimes I’m really warm

You might find me in a pile
or folded nice and neat
I’m known to hang out for a while
at a height of several feet

At times I get collected
in a basket on the floor
I’ve often felt neglected
since I came here from the store

I’m made of lots of stuff
My tags won’t let that hide
There’s this setting called Air Fluff
It’s just the coolest dryer ride

It can really be a drag
when the washer does break down
That’s when they’ll put me in a bag
and take me into town

I know I may acquire
some new wrinkles now and then
but I have no real desire
to be ironed out again

Sometimes they spray me with this gunk
to get stains off of me
Sometimes they store me in a trunk
where there is no light to see

Of course, if I’m washed and dried and put away
I guess laundry I’ll no longer be
Just check back later in the day
I’ll have reappeared, I guarantee

“Rumor”

I’m just a rumor
I happen all the time
I could be about a tumor
or perhaps about a crime

Never mind about what's fact
My job's to misconstrue
I tend to have a knack
for being far from true

By the time I’m spread around
I’ll be hard to recognize
I perhaps might even sound
like a great big heap of lies

I know many can’t resist
no matter how they strive
but to help me to exist
by keeping me alive

“Time”

I’m just something known as time
Change and I go hand in hand
I can seem bitter as a lime
when things don’t turn out as planned

Sometimes I’m known to fly
Sometimes I drag along
There are even times when I
might end up in a song

Two ways I am measured
are a watch and an hourglass
I hope you’ve always treasured
those great moments as they pass

Life can move at a fast past
Don’t let it pass you by
Time is something not to waste
Some is gone when you blink your eye

“Pizza”

I’m just some flour crust
covered up with sauce and cheese
Call me Pizza if you must
My life has never been a breeze

I have been through lots of shocks
since first I was prepared
I once lived inside a box
Yes, I’d say that I was scared

I remember being cold
Really frozen through and through
Then one day I was sold
and taken some place new

Today I went to a metal cell
where I was feeling much defeat
and there was no one I could tell
to please turn down the heat

Along with all my cheese
my crust was turning brown
It was then that with great ease
someone took me out and set me down

They slid me from that scalding tray
onto this thin block of wood
It’s been such a horrific day
I hope the rest will turn out good

“Clock”

I’m just a clock on the wall
and sometimes I chime
I don’t have a ball
but I do have a time

I get to stay in this place
It’s not a bad fate
People look at my face
to make sure they’re not late

I’m not the digital type
You can tell by my gear
I don’t get the hype
about knowing the year

I keep moving all day
and throughout the night
Some folks might say
that I’m wound a bit tight

I’ve never gone cuckoo
and I’m not a grandfather
I’ll keep ticking for you
and it’s never a bother

I think most would agree
life has many demands
yet a clock such as me
has only time on its hands

“Paper”

I’m just a paper sheet
For the longest time I was a tree
I think it’s really kinda neat
the process they have done with me

I have lines in two directions
to make it neater when you write
You’ll be making less corrections
the more you strive to get it right

There are thirty-four holes in me
Thirty-one are rather small
I believe the other three
are for when you finish with it all

I was given a perforation
That means they cut me part-way through
To avoid any aggravation
try to tear it straight and true

Right now I’m getting some new ink
somewhat akin to a tattoo
He’s writing as he tries to think
It’s always black and never blue

Looks like he’s almost done with me
I’m not sure if I’ll be back
My two neighbors said our destiny
is to end up in a messy stack

“Poem”

I’m just a poem
made of words all strung together
This page here is my home
right down to the letter

I am written all in ink
which the author can’t erase
For him to overthink
could mean the shredder I will face

If that is to be my fate
then I guess it’s his decision
But hopefully I’ll reincarnate
into a new revision

If he makes me good enough
there might be copies made of me
He mumbled about competition being tough
and how he’ll have to wait and see

Though his words can have a way
it’s certainly no Macbeth
If he sends me off today
he shouldn’t hold on to his breath

I, of Hiraeth

I. Boudica

I am made
of falcon cries,
of sweat under
a horse's mane,
of foam on the
flanks, spears
rattling against
shields, chants
across barren
fields, the deep
musk of undergrowth
burned into the skin.

What am I
but a singular
thread in an
ancestral design
I have never
known but felt,
pulsing with the
savage wing beats
of a bird of prey.
Hands I have known
and not known.
People I have seen
and not seen.
Places I have been
and not been.

I am cast from
earth molded
in blood, of a land
that sputtered up
the result of broken
promises. Bodies given
against their will
along with the body
of the land. What

is a spoil if it is not
ravaged, taken?
What is the promise
of a dead man in the face
of a woman?

A design that has
been traced for
generations and
etched into being
by men, women, lands
that will not be ash
on the wind,
an echo of things
destroyed, but a fire
burning, consuming
all that would rage
against it
for better or
for worse.

I who chose
war, fire, blood.
Who plunged wrists
into blackened earth
felt the pulse of
my people, promises
foregone made embers.
With sharpened soul
and wildfire rage,
my chariot a spark
ripping my name
from the throats of
men and rattling in
the heaving lungs
of horses. Boudica!
Boudica in those beasts'
eyes, nostrils flared,
hooves gouging the earth
with each shuddering
strike, coats shining
under a burning sun.
Smoke that choked

the cries of Roman soldiers
as flesh singed, bones charred,
heads yielded to axes,
bodies ravaged underfoot
of the rumbling of wheels,
feet, shouts from the belly
of a land, of a people
that would not be
undone.

I am born
over thousands
of years, of a woman
who burned London
to the ground, and now
those streets are filled
with her form, bronze
cast hair billowing as
flames behind her
on a chariot yoked
with thunder eaters.
A woman who engulfed
Briton and declared
all must die: men,
women, children, as
the Romans did to them.
How can I fight
the helix of history,
of ancient places,
people, the terra
incognita of the soul
that simmers in my
blood? The luminous
thread of memory
that hums with a
lineage and a people
I and others will never
know, except for the
sense that I was born
into the wrong time.

I am felled
by the hoarse

hollow call of
my men dying,
animals screaming,
arrows whistling
through ashen air
leaving streaks of
sun through the haze
as one last act of
mercy. Javelins
rising in an arc
thudding down into
the earth, pinning
my men to the land
they love. I will not
yield, will not bow
my head, will not suffer
another bruising of
my body, of my home
at the Romans' hands.

Here, here the memories
will live, the people,
the lands, the places,
the relics, the reliquaries,
the breaths between the lines
of history, of being, of moments
that will be given form, flesh,
consciousness to speak
once more across the ether.

I of Iceni tribe, decimated lands
that bled and wept with the tears
of kinsmen and invaders,
where everything in the end
was lost; burned embers
on the wind, drifting, waiting
to catch in another time,
another place, in another
heart so that all will not
be forgotten. As I gathered
sword and spear, blood on
cheeks, tears in eyes and
disappeared into the shadowed

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trees, form being swallowed
up by fog and the crushing

weight of a land and people
lost, someone will remember.

Someone must remember
the soul slipping away
into the withered night.

Hiraeth

II. Agincourt

“One life is all we have and we live it as we believe in living it. But to sacrifice what you are and to live without belief, that is a fate more terrible than dying.” – Joan of Arc

A quiet between fields of snow, where men
Walked not white winter’s breath, but fletching fired
From English hands. I who heard death at three,
Crystalline tears fell fierce to earth. A whim
Of God. No blessing, no vision, just fear.
No saint. And I? A child to pin a false
And dying wish on. Agincourt, it haunts
My dreams. My little eyes never saw death
But drank its ripples, echoing out across
Edges of life, of world, of country. Death
Who rained arrows on French heads, laughed at fate.
A King of glass will not protect us. No,
Silence will reign and snow will plummet down
Until we rise against it. Shouts in mouths
Steel in our hands, rage bellowing forth.

A rage that lashed my body to this post.
They called me heretic, a demon, witch.
I cannot stop the tears that will be burned

Oh brother, remember me, my smile

Away from skin that stream over my face.
Hands shaking under ropes binding my life
To judgment given down by English hands.

A farce, these priests, this trial, speaking through God,
So mischievous and joyful. Bright you said.

Speaking for God. The French, they called me holy.
These fools, a devil. ‘Mercy bless this body.’
I bite my lip before I lose my will.

Oh sister, do you recall golden bugs

My tears, my blood, my very bones are soon
To be a whisper floating over wind
And water. Not my voice or my country,
The people, Domrémy; I raised the sword

And purple flowers dancing down beneath

And fought because a peasant dies a ghost
In times of war. Not seen or heard, a mere

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Dirt grave along the dusty road. I lived
That life. God knows the toll that takes, how hard
Our feet, while we sang songs and swayed with mirth

You fight and toil your life away only
To find a spear through spine, or arrow piercing
Your sister's small frame, village set ablaze.
High up in the Domrémy fairy tree?

Royalty, I learned, never cared at all
For us, the common man. Too late that dawned.

I served a prince playing at king, who left
Oh mother, please forgive my clumsy hands

Me here, with torch and flame raised heavenward.
The chanting crowd thunders through me, rattles
The post. I raise my voice with them and pray.
That broke your best glazed dish and ruined lunch.

I shout to God, who left long ago.
I shout until my tears blur into sweat.

I shout, eyes riveted on crucifix
Oh father, hold tight to the speckled stone

Through sparks and smoke caressing skin and cloth,
As embers slowly embrace life and limb.

I pray for salvation, blood boiling, eyes
I found tucked under the Madonna statue.

Melting back into skull to glimpse the cross
Held high aloft. Amidst the haze was truth.

The root of me began back at Agincourt.
God, please, I need to see them one more time.

I felt at three what men could not: sorrow.

A quiet between fields of snow, I Joan
Watching embers of strife glitter and gleam
With spilled blood, learned that day no God walked
That ground, or wept. Save, for a saint in skirts
Drawn by the harshness that honor decreed.
Nothing more, nothing less, just prophecy.

Hiraeth

VI. 2,063 Unsinkable Fathoms

Is where these stories lie.

Original Fosbery life jacket.
Manufactured from linen and cork.
Only 12 life jackets remain in the world
out of a total of over 3,500 that were on board the ship.
Recovered from the wreck site by the Mackay-Bennet.
The first of four ships chartered by the White Star Line
to search for bodies after the sinking.

We have to remember this was cut from a body
floating in frigid Atlantic waters,
the life, long since gone out of the frozen frame.
That linen touched flesh that was once alive.
Cork buoyed a body that never imagined
leaping from a railing, piercing the sharp swath
of ice-tinged obsidian, to a final grave.

Miss Helen Loraine Allison, 2

What you see before you is a testament
of how quickly life leaves a body in 5 minutes
and what remains once plucked from the dark waves.

Master Carl Edgar Asplund, 5

It cannot tell us of the voice having gone hoarse
howling into the cavernous coal crushed night sky
that only offered back the pleas and thrashing
of those damned to the same fate bereft of a lifeboat.

Miss Sigrid Elisabeth Andersson, 11

It cannot tell us of the dismal bobbing
in water the wearer could no longer feel
as blood came to a standstill, frozen in the veins.

Miss Robina Maggie Ford, 7

It cannot show us the eyelashes fixed open,
the hands curled inwards akin to a dead spider
under the life jacket before your eyes
that kept a soul floating gently on the wake
of gilded dreams that turned to gelid hell.

Master Gilbert Sigvard Emanuel Danbom, 4 months

Photo memorial to those who perished.
Of the estimated 2,240 passengers on board,
only roughly 703 survived, while the over 1,500
remaining passengers perished in the icy waters.
Of that number only 337 bodies were found.
The rest were buried or lost at sea.
53 who died were children.
All but one from third class.

Master Harold Victor Goodwin, 9

We have to remember these sepia stained photos
are more than memories to a life gone by.
These are records that stare us down, dare you
to pause, to not walk by with a mumbled ‘how sad,’

Master William Andrew Johnston, 8

to think of how this person perished in finery
or the simple clothes of an immigrant, hoping
for something better than this, better than

Miss Gertrud Emilia Klasén, 1

a bleary portrait pasted to chipboard so you
can finally move past the allure of tragedy
and realize these were living, breathing people.

Master Paul Folke Pålsson, 6

And that every object, every item
you have brushed by are more than pristine artifacts
under glass cases, tucked behind velvet ropes;
they once lived in the flow of history
before being severed from it. Plucked from the tumult
of time and rendered static by curious eyes
and morbid musings that cannot comprehend
this event was inevitable, but not the loss.

Miss Mathilde Lefebvre, 12

Partly submerged head of a porcelain doll.
Never recovered from the wreck.
Noted on an artifact dive by Robert Ballard.
Left for ethical reasons to its final resting place.

We have to remember how this came to be.
A child hanging on fervently to the hand

of a sibling, mother, father, stranger,
Master Juha Niilo Panula, 7
struggling through the crush of passengers scrambling
across all seven decks to find loved ones, to find
a way off the ship, beginning to pitch down into
the shadowy sea. Little hands clutching a doll
Miss Treasteall Peacock, 3
to their rapidly beating heart, feeling the chill
of the porcelain on their cheek as they try
to block out the screams of those below freezing,
those that careen past leaping from railings,
those that do not want to die as the last lifeboats
Master George Hugh Rice, 8
drift away. A child who is alone, the guiding hand gone.
Who stares into the rising depths swallowing bodies,
a gaping mouth that does not judge, just breathes in.
Miss Salli Helena Rosblom, 2
A child that cannot swim, beats back at the waters,
one hand holding the doll, the other fighting for life
as limbs leaden and clothes tug down down down
into the black endless night.
Master Walter John Van Billiard, 9.
The very first body pulled from the sea.
We have to remember a child holds
her mother's hand, viewing the memorial
for the children. She clutches in tiny fingers
her false boarding ticket that will tell her
at the end if she has survived or perished,
Master Thomas Henry Sage, 4
and knows they will never give her
a ticket of someone who perished.
And yet, she wants to know the feeling,
the immense sorrow, the last moments behind
Master Karl Thorsten Skoog, 11
those sepia faces, those wide eyes, those beaming smiles
that could not know one day they would all be together
on a wall, passed by those who wanted to know
the dramatic end of their passenger.

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Miss Telma Matilda Ström, 2

More than anything, she will remember the chill
of phantom fingers in the warmth of her own
as she squeezes the hand she cannot see,
and promises they are not alone.

Refraction

He leans towards me
Lips parted
My heart beating
To the sound of her screams
Blinding me
Crying
I whisper in her ear
I can't handle the crying
You have to stop
Putting pepper on my eggs
In the morning
He lays in bed while I
Get up
Get her
Little hand waving in the air
I give it a squeeze while
We walk slowly down the street together
He smiles with
Her bright blue eyes
Staring at me
From across the room
Her legs kicking
While he makes faces
Eyebrows raised
Mouth wide open
I hear myself tell one of his jokes
What's the dentist's favorite time
Of day? Two
Thirty
More minutes and he'll be home
His hands pressing everywhere
I stroke
Her hair back softly and he kisses
My forehead
Crying out
Why don't you just go
To sleep?
She stretches
Arms above my head
Then opens her eyes
And smiles at me like the first time
We met
The sound of her laughter

Ringing through the bar
Even then.

An Oral Mechanism Examination in the Nighttime

I.

I watch the red numbers
on the digital clock engage in
an ongoing metamorphosis,
The five growing a limb for the six.
then later, the body of the eight
splicing itself into a nine: a grotesque
carnival of natural numbers.
Fruitless.

II.

Your mouth hangs wide open
like a bell beside my ear.
Each exhale ringing louder
than the inhale before it.
Your moist tissue moving.
An eruption of reverberations
crashing against your teeth
and spilling out past your lips,
a tempest contained
in the two-inch pocket of air
and pillow between us.

III.

I decide to inspect your mouth and
retrieve my penlight from the nightstand drawer,
I adhere to universal precautions and wear latex gloves.
I review each tooth, the circle of light hovering above
each one, a silent helicopter of truth.
I make a mental note to inform you that your breath
still smells like last night's beef stew.

IV.

The vent above me pours air down
onto my bare neck. I shiver once
then pull myself closer to you,
curling my fingers into your chest hairs.
My rubbered hands removing a few of them,
follicle and all, by accident.
They fall, littering the white sheets
with curly shavings of chestnut.

V.

I turn my attention back
to the status of your pharyngeal
arches, but you close your mouth.
Tongue clapping around
for a moment
before releasing
a series of sounds that forms
my name.

I watch it hanging there
in the cold night air:
suspended apparition.
I take my gloves off before
plucking it
from where it floats,
the familiar warmth of your voice
in every chilled compression and
rarefaction. I fold it
into my hand for safe-keeping,
turn off the penlight
and nuzzle into the space
below your chin, your sleepy
hands fumbling to hold me closer
and the numbers across the room
briefly frozen in memory.

Exhibit

She sits frozen, a wax figure in a history museum with little legs crossed in the dirt, backpack thrown to the side. In the posed desert scene around her dove forms are mounted to the tops of saguaros and glued to the branches of plastic palo verdes. A mountain backdrop held up by a half-hidden rope in the imagined distance. You try catching her eye from beyond the railing with no luck leaving you to wonder if memory is circular or linear or static. She considers the treasures spread out before her, taken from jean pockets, a communion of the found: rusted nails and rocks, cactus bones and bits of snake skin. The placard states that this girl tucked these items inside the creviced trunk of an ironwood and came back every day to revisit them. The crevice so narrow that they could only be retrieved by hands smaller than yours will ever be again. Nearby another sign cautions you that this is only an approximation of the way things were, no way of knowing the feeling of then for sure. You remember the look of peace on her face to be closer to fact than fiction before walking out, the mountains shrinking behind you, the plain ahead foreign and flat and your overgrown hands flopping uselessly at your sides.

Fifty-Year Marriage

When my parents come to the end
of their marriage, I'm twenty years
deep into my own. Perspective
takes time and discipline and survival.
The house needs mending. My own
children are like waves just beginning
to rise. I look at old pictures and recall
how sad my wife was—was I sober?
On a subatomic level, divisions are
the rule. Solid matter is only a concept.
My parents are in their late seventies
and mask the terror they feel toward
their own future deaths by tending
house plants in separate houses.

Ship of Theseus

"The ship wherein Theseus and the youth of Athens returned had thirty oars, and was preserved by the Athenians who took away the old planks as they decayed, putting in new and stronger timber in their place."

—Plutarch, *excerpt from Theseus*

When Regina carries an injured rabbit
behind the shed to kill it humanely
with the nose of a shovel, its screaming stops.

I go to the hammock to sway
and think, not of the rabbit
with the broken back or the sedan that broke it,

but how the source of the first violence
on earth must've given over to the first scream,
how that scream fell into the original poem

like a seed falling off a boot into loam
or as rain from the sky onto fontanel,
but it fell nonetheless. How that first poem

became a sextant that slipped between
the fine lace of waves, leading the wedged nose
of a ship on its search for a glint

of the original world. How that world
is still floating in the Holocene up above
as Regina puts the shovel away and joins me

in the hammock—who knows where her mind is?
Our bodies moving back and forth together,
seemingly of their own volition.

Test

—*Bright Angel to Havasupai Gardens, Grand Canyon*

I've passed through in the high ponderosa desert
under the spell and drift of air thick with the smell
of juniper and sage. There's a trail under my legs
I've started down. Where it leads is anyone's guess.
Like, what's hidden around that bend? Timeline matters.
Perspective is crucial. After all, things that present
as finite are anything but. After all, the heat death
of the universe can be calculated on a spreadsheet.
After all the after alls, someone else will wrap
their fingers around a shovel and keep on digging.
Water is patient. Wind itself is silent. We think
about those things differently though, don't we?
In many religions, life is just a test we're graded on
or doomed to repeat until we perfect it,
but I'm only paraphrasing. Truth is more granular.
Truth is the firecracker beardtongue or plateau
prickly pear, and human legs are bonafide miracles.
How they work together in service to our minds
and allow our senses to bear witness to objects
spinning in the heavens. For a time. For a short while.
Forever and ever and ever again. The temperature
rises the further I descend down this trail
bespeckled with mule droppings. I'm sinking deeper
into the origin of solid land eroded and exposed
by the word meander under the force of gravity.
The high walls of the canyon grow higher and higher.

Hellroaring as Prayer

—*Yellowstone National Park*

Let us descend again this waiting mountain
lined with columbine and dusty trails.
Chain our hearts to this body animal.

Let us blaze as madly as avalanche lilies
accepting soft explosions of sunlight
as we inspire friction from rimrock to valley.

Let our boots sprout lodgepole pines that we
might call legs, and swing them further
downward into a ravine of howl and roar.

Give us a wind that screams truth against
idling buttes that lie in repose
sprouting paintbrushes red with decadence.

Let us enter the office of natural justice.
Let each step break apart our leggy muscles.
Let us throb in the breaking as we must.

Tether our fates to spruce and baneberry.
Let us rest upon river boulders half sunken
within the wandering ripple of eddy.

Let us linger inside this wild heaven
for a brief moment of forgivable trespass.
Lead us out the same way we came in.

I Hold with Those Who Favor Fire

Reader, the Earth is so obviously burning—
even if it's burning somewhere else.
Even if, here, another rainstorm overflows
gutters in a flash of gluttonous wet.
I'm writing to you as I look out upon
the pulsing green world knowing
my kids know their future is wrecked.
Knowing my kids know their future is fire.
We looked at images of Earth from space
together yesterday—tendrils of wildfire smoke
are visibly pluming toward the black
beyond the sky's clear-blue edge.
I pointed to the green between
the pillars of smoke where fairy aphids
bounced like cottonwood seeds as we hiked
through the forest and asked my kids
if they remember? If they remembered
the gametrail and the smell of wood rot?
The umbrellas of paw paws and
the blackberries we picked along the way?
I want to apologize to my kids,
but the scale of the offense seems global.
The daily extinctions and acidification.
The ice sheets thinning to current.
The forests ripped up for cattle graze.
The swamps drained for condominiums.
The world is so obviously fucked.
The world is so beautiful it hurts.
I am maturing into this knowledge.
I don't pray anymore—even my kids know
that prayers won't change a thing—but
I imagine wildfire smoke travels like prayers
in search of the ear on high. Prayers like

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Assigned Faculty: Danielle Beirne & Monty Webster

antidepressants dissolving into the bloodstream.

Prayers reabsorbed back into the watershed.

I am steeping in collective knowledge.

I am watching the rain from my window
and writing this letter while all around me
the world tries to catch its breath.

It's any wonder we're not terrified
all the time. We are terrified all the time.

Repair

Because my father's platelet count dipped
they canceled the surgery for his hernia. And
because nobody told him it was canceled,
he showed up prepped for the worst—they said,
sorry, and he went home to his brother's house,
which is where he's been living since
my mother told him not to come home.
All weekend now he's a justifiable mess.
We talk on the phone and his voice trembles
across the threshold of my ear. His anger forks
across the sky like heat lightning. Anger over
the broken healthcare system, his broken body.
I realize I haven't seen my father in weeks.
Why do we love at all? Why does the mind
spin itself awake at night like a carbide-tipped
saw blade? Like a wasps' nest under duress?
I can imagine my father gone. My mother gone.
I can imagine the pain of remembering them.
My father could be bleeding internally like a city
under siege—the ancient city of the self
collapsing into worry over the end that always
comes. I'm talking to my father on the phone,
and suddenly remembering of the story of Horatius
who saved Rome by destroying the only bridge
that led across the river—how Horatius
single-handedly held off the Etruscans while
the bridge was dismantled behind him.
How he ran across the last standing beam,
dove into the Tiber under a hail of spears
and arrows, and swam safely to the other side.
Saved from the moment, but not from the fall.