

501

POEMS

by

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POEMS

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Section I  
Water Music Cycles

Is all that we see or seem  
But a dream within a dream?

--Poe

WATER MUSIC

## WATER MUSIC

The sound of homing gulls--  
like a child called home for supper  
who remembers he has no mother  
to call him.

-----

I can hear waves rejected by the shore.  
I watch them leave.  
Back where the sun sank  
they patter in the dark  
                  like scolded children  
slowly ascending  
                  dark and endless stairs.

-----

I can almost/when the roar recedes  
hear their shy laughter/like small  
hopping feet on leaves.  
The page lies idle/on the fold of my lap  
and my hands furrow my hair  
again and deeply/fingers stiff  
till the roar of the sea returns.

imagine

the water

no longer

receding,

the tides

ceasing

to flow.

no kiss and

no absence

of kisses.

no more

vicissitudes.

imagine



Pink wings flutter over the silver  
surface of the lake at dawn,  
when the bugle blows. Somewhere  
a fox runs for his small red life,  
the huge black hounds pursue  
and a fierce man with a beard  
whips and shouts. But my love/  
flamingo flying in the dawn  
over the still/the still rose water  
is true.

When I hear sunrise birdsong  
morning seems a million miles.  
In sharp umber light  
the reflective lake settles  
down to flocks of birds  
in winter mourning, black  
on silver surfaces. They wound  
the tension as they light--  
the rose of sunlight fades,  
the sun sinks in the morning,  
eastward in the lake's blood.  
It is a day, a million miles  
of mourning every day  
I hear sunrise birdsong.

I dreamed a tree grew by the lake.  
White swans beneath its branches lay.  
Four maids lived in a cot nearby  
And sang green leaves onto the oak all day.  
  
Time moved slowly, like the sun.  
Blue skies where white swans floated laid  
Old ghosts to ashes, under oaks.  
The tree grew wide by maidenside all day.  
  
A hunter came by with a silver ax,  
Leading a golden fawn, eyes wide.  
He felled the tree. He slew the swans.  
The youngest girl became his bride.

Her sisters died.

I dreamed that dreams are never true,  
Are false as snowflakes that expire,  
Breasts that wither. The dreams of creatures  
Dreamed are afterglows from ancient fires.

THE MERLYN POEMS

## Merlyn's End

Now he is about to be born.  
Wrinkles come from all the world's  
seas, from the rents in the earth,  
to settle into his face. His eyes  
hide behind masses of jutting  
failures. His youth's all but  
sucked out by this moment--his veins  
slow, remembering everything about  
to start happening. This beginning  
is the end of charmed life, magics  
spent in an instant. Spells fade  
like the thought of a man who dies  
just as he thinks it. Senile,  
brittled, used-up and ready to quit,  
his eyes almost open,  
almost, but not yet.