

Morning Ritual

Gulls arc, daintily landing
closeup with orange-splayed legs and dancing
on the rain-glazed loading dock
boisterously fighting over kitchen scraps.

Walking on the greying cement I carefully
shield my notebook and papers
continuing up the slight incline of Western Avenue
as I watch a broken figure approaching.

Hair jutting to the sky like bone-colored milkweed
his pale face cross-hatched with lines
resembling broken egg shells,

"Hey, pard! Can you help an ol' hand
out?"

"Nice line, kinda original, does it usually work?" I ask.

"Does a bear use toilet paper?"

"Interesting proposition."

I give him a handful of coins, this exchange
and the disagreeing sea gulls, their squawking,
it reminds me of the bartering in the market place.

— Earle Thompson

Sunrise

The sun came up this morning
like a madwoman's red eye
peering through the bell tower
of the Catholic church
at the huddled town.

She lay
her wild arms of fire
across the sky,
and pigeons fluttered up
like whispers.

— Elizabeth Romero

The Stranger

(To many of us, the homeless are stranger

ah-hi-e, ah-hi-e!

(do you speak Shoshone?)

I am much pleased, I am much rejoiced
Ta-ba-bone!

stranger walks among us
Ah-hi-e, ta-ba-bone, Ah-hi-e.
I am pleased stranger rejoice!

— Carol Cross

Twenty-Two Eleven Second Avenue 5:53 AM

For 13 cents Bob
I walk across the landscape of gray
cement, its lines and angles
are highlighted by the moon
and streetlights.

Pigeons and seagulls,
they become morning and metro
buses begin their daily route.

I read Beckett
choose the spaces between words
and study the brightly-colored neon
signs in the grocery
store window.

Again, I count
the various coins, waiting,
and light a filtered
cigarette.

Rust-colored outlines
of maple leaves on the sidewalk
are washed by rain.

I turn,
listen to the collapsing
of wings.

— Earle Thompson