

Bill Siverly

Salmonberry Song

Noontide shadows on sand at Seaview:
Michael McDowell pursues with coats and shoes
His children dancing barefoot on spring surf
That chases them and erases their tracks,
Draws them back to ocean's vast embrace.

Elizabeth Ann McCracken McDowell
At eighty-five recounts the early days
Riding from Ilwaco to Seaview by wagon,
Horses high-stepping over sand at low tide,
Horses emerging at twilight from the waves.

In pink raincoat, blue jeans and white tennies
Betty descends to the lighthouse at North Head,
Grandchildren bounding around her—
At'at'a'hliia, who casts her children to the sea,
Here redeemed by our lady of the rocks.

Like Blue Jay who went to the land of ghosts,
Lewis and Clark found themselves stranded
On winter's coast, where nothing seemed real:
Week after week of cold rain and dreadful squalls,
The natives thievish, dirty, and small.

But for Chinook who had always lived there
Wind, rain and fog were spirit-powers,
Whom they honored with hats, capes, canoes,
And keeping warm in winter lodges, recounting
How the world was made for people coming soon.

Like Blue Jay the Americans wanted to go home
To property, propriety, and plain dealing,
So they did not know what they had been given,
They did not know that death had already come to them,
Like the simple desire for sunshine.

Betty sets the pace over sand to North Jetty
Recalling workmen with trains dumping rocks,
Silting in the coastline from here to North Head,
And Finnish settlers dynamiting the face of the Cape
To make the ocean current convenient for ships.

Along the trail on what remains of Cape Disappointment
Betty and Michael and Bill pause
To ponder a single salmonberry blossom:
Five-pointed purple star the size of a baby's open hand
Dangling from April's bare brambles like a promise.

Out on Long Beach, Americans gunning their cars
Leave tracks that following tides erase,
Drawing them back to ocean's vast embrace;
The grateful people wanted Coyote to choose a wife,
But Coyote said, "No, I have to go upriver now."

Bill Siverly

Kelley Point

(for Jutta Donath)

Like ghosts we always return
To the scene of our consummate tryst
Some twenty years ago or more,
When we were married to others
And crazy to be together.

Late September under a warm spell
I followed you along the cottonwood trail,
Leaves shimmering like hummingbirds.
My hands caught up with your hips,
You turned around and smiled.

Slipping into the underbrush,
I spread my jacket on fallen leaves
Still wet from last night's rain.
We shed some clothes and joined
Our bodies in communion for a time.

Afterward we sat on shore and watched
Willamette ships receding toward the sea
Upon Columbia's ambient tidal reach.
The waves they made lapped gently
At the sand beneath our feet.

Such confluence was never foreseen
When Oregon booster Hall J. Kelley
Dreamed a city rising in his lifetime
Where underbrush and marshy land
Lay flooded half the year.

Kelley never saw this point of his
Because it never existed
Before two million tons of river sand,
Dredged and dumped like loads of night,
Gave rise to black cottonwoods and wrens.

Imagine if you can a piece of land,
Devoid of meaning and history,
Until we two came here and gave it time.
Now Kelley Point's become a city park
And lovers stay discreetly on the path.

Remember if you can the two of us
Crazy to be together all the time.
Like real people we always return
To where the long impossible journey began
To the possible land of unconditional love.

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Trevitt's Estate

May of eighteen sixty-one, sternwheeler *Colonel Wright*
Landed its cargo of fortune-hunters alongside the confluence,
Eager mud bank squatters on the Nez Perce Reservation.
Victor Trevitt unpacked his consignment of miners' supplies
And opened his canvas emporium for business.

A few days later five or six men were sitting on a log,
Shooting the breeze about what to name their outpost of progress.
John Silcott reckoned they should honor some Indian chief.
Just then Vic Trevitt stepped out of his tent and said,
"Gentlemen, how about Lewiston, after Lewis and Clark?"

Gentlemen agreed at once, and Vic Trevitt, who hailed from
New Hampshire, Ohio, and Oregon, by way of the Mexican War,
Decamped downriver to The Dalles, to run the Mt. Hood Saloon.
Citizen Trevitt served two terms in Oregon's legislature,
Ten years later decamped to San Francisco, where he died.

In eighteen eighty-three under the terms of his will
Trevitt was buried beneath an obelisk on a Mid-Columbia island,
Memaloose, immemorial cemetery of Wasco and Wishram.
Trevitt allowed how sporting men might come up short at Resurrection,
So he would take his chances with the Indians.

Lewiston established tiny Trevitt Park on the brow of Normal Hill.
I remember running under elms and descending the steps to Idaho St.
My mother and I rested under the white gazebo overlooking town.
After she died, I sat in lawyer Cannon's office in the old Pinch house,
Overlooking Victor Trevitt's shady midsummer estate.