**The Pier: Under Pisces**

The shallows, brighter,

Wetter than water,

Tepidly glitter with the fingerprint-

Obliterating feel of kerosene.

Each piling like a totem

Rises from rock bottom

Straight through the ceiling

Aswirl with suns, clear ones or pale bluegreen,

And beyond! where bubbles burst

Sphere of their worst dreams,

If dream is what they do,

These floozy fish—

Ceramic-lipped in filmy

Peekaboo blouses,

Fluorescent body

Stockings, hot stripes,

Swayed by the hypnotic ebb and flow

Of supermarket Muzak,

Bolero beat the undertow's

Pebble-filled gourds repeat;

Jailbait consumers of subliminal

Hints dropped from on high

In gobbets none

Eschews as minced kin;

Who, hooked themselves—bamboo diviner

Bent their way

Vigorously nodding

Encouragement—

Are one by one hauled kisswise, oh

Into some blinding hell

Policed by leathery ex-

Justices each.

Minding his catch, if catch is what he can,

If mind is what one means—

The torn mouth

Stifled by newsprint, working still. If . . . if . . .

The little scales

Grow stiff. Dusk plugs her dryer in,

Buffs her nails, riffles through magazines,

While far and wide and deep

Rove the great sharkskin-suited criminals

And safe in this lit shrine

A boy sits. He'll be eight.

We've drunk our milk, we've eaten our stringbeans,

But left untasted on the plate

The fish. An eye, a broiled pearl, meeting mine,

I lift his fork . . .

The bite. The tug of fate.

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