



IUScholarWorks at Indiana University South Bend

To One and Several Poets

Lasater, Michael

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To one and several poets:

I read some of your poems again today –
first those colossal pieces with the hangman, the stars,
and the shroud – then the one where you rhyme the girl
to bed in a thicket thorned with sweet grief
and roses wild and red.

Really nice.

Through a teacup crack you escape down to the climbing,
plunging sea. Splendidly abroad, you wire back:
THE PLANTAGENETS ARE DONE FOR! IF ONLY THEY HAD LISTENED!

On your speaking tour you drink the Pacific dry,
and wow an army of contract bridge players
by conjuring a trick on the spot – a sestina no less –
six words breathing life, love, death.

You sing a wizard mist damp with the tears
of blowsy barmaids and part-time lovers,
some of whom may actually have known you and provided, at least,
the gift of an idea, some tiny salvation you shrewdly
invest for profit on tomorrow's always empty page.

Magician, jongleur, troubadour –
you are wonderful.

And yet, I cannot follow you.

I come from a place where words have abandoned language,
where crows become priests, trees no longer
can shed their leaves, and the sky itself has been set
on fire. All the old rituals have given way
to a new, bloodless communion –
the sanctification of indifference.

Poetry lives hard here.
Everything tastes of copper.

It grows late.

I open a window to let the day just past
out into the night. Down the block
I can hear the voices of children
playing after dinner –

double double this this –
double double that that –

. . . some tiny salvation.