

WAYNE F. LARRABEE, JR.



RACING THE TRAIN

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To Shane, Sascha, and Kai

Every poet needs a muse.
I have been blessed with three.

Orcas Island

I watch my son, dancing on shore.
He whispers to shells of departed clams;
explores a blood star, fingering the secret mouth,
underneath. His pole catches seaweed fish;
pale, green – they shimmer and dive.
Hands grasp jellyfish, dream-clear;
swimming, they disappear.

Morning becomes memory:
two lines drawn with light,
sky on sea, sea on shore.
His iridescent spirit
sanctifies the land.

The Circle

We follow the forest path,
my son on his bike
me striding beside.
Sky pieces slip through leaves.
Spokes project myths on
passing ferns.
We two
run, ride;
oscillate, bound by
the elastic light.
Wheels accelerate.
Love stretches and thins.
We do not anticipate
the burst
into the brilliant glade,
the sudden crescendo
of sun and sky!

Kid's Glossary to Cascade Snowfall

1. A concrete poem
looks like it
means.
2. A fractal is
a mathematically precise way
to draw a jagged
line.
3. Jackson Pollock was
an American painter
born in Cody, Wyoming
whose drops of paint
on canvas
look somewhat like
yours.
4. Winter is a season
to harvest
poems.

Through the Window

the luminous oranges are arranged
pendulous spheres – green and gold –
among glassy leaves.

There is no movement save
the unblinking sparrow's eye,
no sound but the children's voices
splashing over the distant wall.

The shower of music falls;
chords of pastel-colored notes
seep into the violet shadows,
stain the ancient stones –
"Las canteras rosas,"

These mountain stones of Morelia.

Racing the Train

Our unwashed Oldsmobile
moves through the northwest night.

Rain and fog mix
exposed by the expanding lights,
an emulsion of shifting states.

We overtake the train –
a phantom, ethereal
in these hours of sleep.

Our parallel paths meet
and we pass
unnoticed.

The cassette plays melodies
from the fifties.

We were in Nebraska then,
four brothers racing the trains.

The tracks stretched from stockyards
to tasseled fields. Boxcars, with open doors
and smells of manure,
jolt started.

We challenged each car
(shadows of legs falling
beneath turning wheels)
and lost,

until we chased only the final syllables
of the distant whistle.

→

My Father, Age 4

→ Of the four,
one continues his measured pace
on Nebraska soil;
one cools and solidifies
after twenty years of burning
in the Arizona desert;
one lies sleeping in the
Colorado dust, transformed to ashes
by the fire of Vietnam;
and one, in the Misty Isles
still pursues his midwestern muse
crafting lines of
words, chasing the train's
vanished voice.

His clear eyes
greet mine
from the hand-colored
photograph,
perfectly balanced on the library wall.
Outside
neon signs swim
in a silver fog.
An angular house
white, stark
emerges, disappears
without sound.
Grey seeps through
glass,
diffuses his image.
I strain to perceive
shape and hue.
Failing,
I paint a mirage:
My twelfth birthday
The curve of his hand on mine
The pattern of waves
on sand
Surf brushed with sun
Laughter,
the color of coral.

Cascade Snowfall

A thousand wet faces
fall on the dense fir.
The horizon is

a f r a c t a l o f t r e e t o p s , s h a r p

against the planet's grey breath.

Green mountains are SPLATTERED
Pollock-like with carefully arranged
white blotches:

snowbirds nestled on
dark boughs.

The air is motionless,
its stillness broken only
by a cascade
from the bent branch:

a shower

of powdered

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Cascade Clearcut

We emerge from the twilight forest
deep in the old songs,
saturated with shades (moss
and leaves) of shimmering green.
We encounter desolation:

torn limbs
abandoned to thin air.

Beneath the scarred slopes
swept by unseasonal winds
their roots still breathe.
These gnarled networks of memory
which grasped rock and soil
before our generations
preserve cry of owl,
air pungent with pine and fir,
moon patterns
on mottled stone.

After seventy years of dreaming
under stars and rain
the trees will grow again
from these mists of earth;
and fruit will ripen
once more
on the Tree of Knowledge
of Good and Evil.

Gymnastics Class

(for Shane and Sarah)

Light from the sun
shoots down to the floor
explodes in five year old eyes.
Children leap and briefly soar –
over the horse, onto the floor.

One moment a bird, floating in space,
the next a crab, sprawled on its face.
Hands on the bars, feet in the air
they swing higher and higher
as high as they dare
Childhood balancing
 on the beam.

Family

We sleep in our northern wood.
The autumn rain
brings restless dreams.
Our son moves on distant roads.
Our daughter travels
the cold seas.
In the morning
a lattice of light sways
on the forest floor,
blows over the still sea.
Spears of sun pierce
the curled leaves of fern.
They open,
wreathed in the clear oval beads
of yesterday's rain.

Sascha

Remember the spring –
we two, father and daughter,
sitting silently;
the river, cold and rising;
that moment I sprang
and flew to the bare tree.

Voiceless
perched like a raven, I watched you
alive
breathing time
suddenly a
stranger.

Roslyn

The untamed lilacs
are late to bloom
in these mountain
cemeteries.
Intense purples cascade
over terraced slopes,
enveloping rain-washed
stones
in their fragile
fragrance.

A Decade

Waves flow over sand,
your words over my mind.
The shoreline slowly changes,
year after
year.

Nebraska

A year has passed
since you left.
The cycle of shadow
and light continues.
The grasslands are quiet.
Night returns –
sleep broken by cries
of the coyote.

In the Viewfinder

life is cut into squares
of black and white.
Time is sliced thin –
so thin you see
the earth's pulsing heart
beneath the frozen
shadows.
The energy of light – confined
condensed, compressed –
fuses the grains of silver
into patterns that burn
like hot slag
traces in the pathways
of your brain.

Seattle Morning

"Cloudy around the Sound.
Sixty degrees and scattered showers."
I sip the dark coffee,
waiting for the sun
and this new day.

Ferry Ride

Grey water, Grey clouds;
Shadows of rock and pine
touch the water
touch the clouds.

The Potter's Field

The unexpected calls
pierce the dense air.
Dissonant they ring
from the silver tree,
rooted in the Field of Blood.
Running, you glimpse
the messengers:
a multitude of birds,
black among the leaves.

Discovered they flee --
a fury of wings
beating the silent wind.

Mahler's Ninth

The grey lake
between the trees and mountain
opens her clear blue eye
to the ascending light –
surprised by notes of violin and cello
in the still September air.
Sweet childhood sounds
are intensified, magnified
by the distance from the shore;
then comes the sad silence
and the surface broken
by concentric circles
of tears.

Lakeview Cemetery

We explore graves
Kai and I,
singing rhymes that
swerve
into the March wind,
tracing numbers in stone with bent fingers.
I subtract years,
compare the spans of being
to his five and my forty.
Kai reaches to caress
a marble angel –
her pitted hands
raised in prayer
to the bald, blue sky.
He feels the warmth
rising from tangled roots
of slender grass.

His hand cradles mine.
Energy of innocence
flows,
positive to negative –
a paradox
of evolutionary entropy.

We separate,
shrouded in light,
opaque to the stare
of the waiting
muse.

Wayne F. Larrabee Jr. is a Seattle facial plastic surgeon and photographer. His book *Roslyn – Portrait of a Town* will be published in 1994.

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