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Paeon to place.

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Best wishes
to Helen
and Allan

PAEAN TO PLACE

And the place
was water

Fish

fowl

flood

Water lily mud

My life

in the leaves and on water

My mother and I

born

in swale and swamp and sworn
to water

My father

thru marsh fog

sculled down

from high ground

saw her face

at the organ

bore the weight of lake water

and the cold -

he seined for carp to be sold

that their daughter

might go high

on land

to learn

Saw his wife turn

deaf

and away

She

who knew boats

and ropes

no longer played

She helped him string out nets
for tarring
 And she could shoot
 He was cool
to the man

who stole his minnows
by night and next day offered
 to sell them back
 He brought in a sack
of dandelion greens

if no flood
No oranges - none at hand
 No marsh marigolds
 where the water rose
He kept us afloat

I mourn her not hearing canvasbacks
their blast-off rise
 from the water
 Not hearing sora
rail's sweet

spoon-tapped waterglass-
descending scale-
 tear-drop-tittle
 Did she giggle
as a girl?

His skiff skimmed
the coiled celery now gone
 from these streams
 due to carp
He knew duckweed

fall-migrates
toward Mud Lake bottom
 Knew what lay
 under leaf decay
and on pickerelweeds

before summer hum
To be counted on:
 new leaves
 new dead
leaves

He could not
- like water bugs -
 stride surface tension
 He netted
loneliness

As to his bright new car
my mother - her house
 next his - averred:
 A hummingbird
can't haul

Anchored here
in the rise and sink
 of life -
 middle years' nights
he sat

beside his shoes
rocking his chair
 Roped not 'looped
 in the loop
of her hair'

I grew in green
slide and slant
of shore and shade
Child-time - wade
thru weeds

Maples to swing from
Pewee-glissando
sublime
slime-
song

. . .

Grew riding the river
Books
at home-pier
Shelley could steer
as he read

I was the solitary plover
a pencil
for a wing-bone
From the secret notes
I must tilt

upon the pressure
execute and adjust
In us sea-air rhythm
'We live by the urgent wave
of the verse'

Seven-year molt
for the solitary bird
and so young
Seven years the one
dress

for town once a week
One for home
 faded blue-striped
as she piped
her cry

Dancing grounds
my people had none
 Woodcocks had -
 backland-
air around

Solemnities
such as what flower
 to take
 to grandfather's grave
unless

water lilies -
he who'd bowed his head
 to grass as he mowed
 Iris now grows
on fill

for the two
and for him
 where they lie
 How much less am I
in the dark than they?

Effort lay in us
before religions
 at pond bottom
 All things move toward
the light

except those
that freely work down
to oceans' black depths
In us an impulse tests
the unknown

River rising - flood
Now melt and leave home
Return - broom wet
naturally wet
Under

soak-heavy rug
water bugs hatched -
no snake in the house
Where were they? -
she

who knew how to clean up
after floods
he who bailed boats, houses
Water endows us
with buckled floors

You with sea water running
in your veins sit down in water
Expect the long-stemmed blue
speedwell to renew
itself

O my floating life
Do not save love
for things
Throw things
to the flood

ruined
by the flood
Leave the new unbought -
all one in the end -
water

I possessed
the high word:
 The boy my friend
 played his violin
in the great hall

On this stream
my moonlight memory
 washed of hardships
 maneuvers barges
thru the mouth

of the river
They fished in beauty
 It was not always so
 In Fishes
red Mars

rising
rides the sloughs and sluices
 of my mind
 with the persons
on the edge