

GEOFFREY NUTTER

## THE MERCURIAL WHEEL

One type of perpetual motion machine  
is the mercurial wheel. Below two turning pivots,  
water flows into a cistern, where it shimmers,  
clear and still, but the series  
of bevels and spirals keep turning.  
This machine, however, is imaginary.  
It works very well in the realm  
where the red flower of opium is carved  
in stone or jet above the gatehouse,  
a harbinger, perhaps for argonauts,  
of things to come. Do you think  
scalding emeralds count as money  
in that town? That could be. That could be.  
But more than likely friends and friends of friends  
will see them flowing down a channel,  
past a birdbath overflowing with green  
and moss-covered water in the overgrown grass,  
past Garibaldi, bearded on his plinth  
of marble. Does he sheathe or unsheathe  
the curving saber? It is both, and neither.  
And as the melody coming from the music box  
is only a suggestion, it too is mercurial,  
with no discernible use. Now let us read  
a poem...