

Logan Square · *Jane Poston*

At the appointed hour  
I sat at the fountain.  
No bees on green water.  
The roses dozed inside  
their brittle black heads.  
It didn't seem the place  
to be in December  
where the pennies had worn off  
their light and their charm.

Summers, this fountain floats  
in a square of bluegrass  
and yellow roses;  
when viewed from the air,  
the tiniest lace handkerchief.  
A froth of iron and greening  
coppers pinned to the brim  
with garlands made of animals,  
Galapagos tortoises  
feeling inferior  
with a hint of sea trout  
on their breaths,  
a black bison concealing  
his bitter gray tongue.  
And back to back, eyes  
unreflective as deep snow,  
four giant winged figures  
represent the city's  
four boundary rivers.  
They are looking over  
their shoulders always,  
black leaves sweetening  
in their laps. They  
are waiting always  
for the world to arrive  
as they have expected it.

Swinging my leg over  
the fountain's cement brim,  
I scaled the greening elk.  
In his heroic rack,  
high above the park  
with every bench in view,  
I watched a line of skaters  
crack and snap  
across the pond.  
And far away in town,  
on the rain-slickened avenue,  
Joan of Arc parted traffic  
with her little spear and flag  
where grackles spiraled  
halos above her head.  
She was out again as always  
doing the dangerous  
and important thing,  
and for the moment  
I was sorry for the literal  
rendering of her integrity.

I thought of the cold  
by degrees at home on the prairie,  
and of the cold filling  
the hollow brass vessels  
of the Logan Square statuary,  
the overdressed Presidents  
staring into the city's oratory  
and its darkness, floodlights  
kicking on in their faces.  
I thought of the place  
in the public heart  
where women go alone,  
thinking about the given  
differently and of how  
they develop the ability  
to live alone in love  
with the raw materials  
of the world, building it  
into something stronger and true,  
as driving across Nebraska

I first began to notice  
the fat blue star which buried  
its tusk of light  
in the peripheral lights  
of the little towns one by one.  
I tossed pennies  
in the fountain trench  
and went home  
to a warm apartment.

Last night after dinner  
at the studio of a rude  
doe-eyed woman my married friends  
know well, one canvas  
distracted me from our talking . . .  
an ominous black shape,  
mammalian nearly,  
triangular  
with saw-tooth edges,  
was snagged there  
in a muddy noise of charcoal.  
It was a picture of fear  
and of experience,  
not a purely private  
symbol she had titled "Undertow."