

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."