

OTHER  
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WISE

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

POETRY

*Fistful of Lotus* (Elizabeth Forrest, 2000)

*Home Test* (Adastra Press, 2009)

PROSE

*Quiet Accomplishment: Remembering Cid Corman*

(Ekstasis Editions, 2014)

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*Gregory Dunne*

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## CONTENTS

### I

Ferris Wheel	13
Seed Trees	14
Earl's Sauna	16
At Twenty	17
Talking to Water	20
Dream Song	22
Watching the Dancers Carrying Their Shoes Home	23
In Reply to the English Professor Who Warned His His Teaching Assistants Never to Date a Student	25
Small Beer	26
Vocation	27
Leaving a Forest	29

### II

Ikebana	33
<i>Omi-Ai</i>	34
Along the Kamo	36
In Praise of the Hot Japanese Summer	37
No Hands	39
Girl on Fence	40
Learning Better	42
<i>Hanami</i>	45
Visiting	46
'Frosted pickle barrels'	48
Treasure	49
Hirosato	52
Elegy for Autumn Gordon, 14 Years	54

### III

Throwing My Life Away	57
What Is Great	58
Kae's Vision	59
Walking Home	60
The Dance	62
Finders Keepers	63
Like a Poem	64
Points of Departure	66
Skylight	69
Drifting	70
Home Test	72
First Day	73
<i>Notes</i>	77

*In Noh drama the actor indicates a journey, even a lengthy journey, by standing in one spot and turning himself in a full circle. Thus we see in this simplest of gestures, that points of departure and of arrival are one and the same.*

from *The Gates of Night, Six Songs from the NOH*

– David Jenkins & Yasuhiko Moriguchi

Poetry becomes  
that conversation we  
could not otherwise have.

– Cid Corman



for Cid & Shizumi  
& David Jenkins  
in memory

## *Throwing My Life Away*

*We who have found / love will also find / words for each other*  
– Cid Corman

He put his hands on my shoulders  
and looked me in the eyes.  
He said, *I don't know how to put it to you  
gently, so here goes,  
to marry and go to Japan, man,  
you're throwing your life away.*

But life is meant – isn't it –  
to be thrown away, finally  
with both hands for love?

But I listened to him, I did.  
I listened 'til I stood above the world,  
nothing below but cool shifting shadows  
I couldn't see through,  
like sitting in a pine forest at dusk,  
trying to distinguish deer  
from the smoke of a neighbor's fire.

But now, I prefer to remember purple coneflowers  
that burst the Illinois summer into bloom,  
my father carrying me into the pasture,  
guiding my hand towards things I could trust  
with my own eyes – how to bear the meaning up  
out of flowers into the light waiting  
at the thin edge of a petal's history,  
giving us chance to see  
our cocooned world shattered  
into what lies beyond our own reckoning.

## *What is Great*

in loving you  
is your willingness to let me come  
close enough to be entirely  
trusted by you as if  
I were none other  
than who I am, thus strangely  
I become the man  
I want to be with you.

## *Kae's Vision*

I'm tired of trying to control everything  
I want to happen in my life.  
I want the baby to change that –  
take what I am now and force it  
into new possibilities.

I could have been more careful  
but what is *careful* sometimes  
but dis-ease distracting us  
away from our longed-for hope  
of living here and now.

When they wheel me through the delivery room doors,  
I want to see light breaking  
into our house, a thief  
stealing the life we charted without a child  
and lasering it a zillion pieces to Sunday,  
no room untouched. I'll see stars  
mixing with the gold glittering dust of illusion.

When they wheel me through the beautiful doors  
I already see closing down  
the what-might-have-been, don't laugh,  
you'll be in the yard digging through debris,  
searching for a clue you can't even imagine now  
important: clear mirror  
you'll hold and see our faces in  
for the first time different,  
whole, and new.

## *Walking Home*

*for my father, Jeremiah A. Dunne (1927-2009)*

*Susuki* grass so tall it conceals  
the huge harvest moon.

What I see is the fluffy heads of seed  
blowing into the cool pool of night air.

How splendid to see the stems sway  
and feel the breeze move  
down around the mountains, soft  
as my daughter's breath stirring  
loose from dreams.

This is not a road I ever imagined  
I'd walk, road behind my house,  
road through mountains in Japan  
strung with paper lanterns.

Years slip through holes  
we wear in our pockets,  
falling like coins & jangling  
their passing preciousness.

There are stars on the other side  
where I've come  
to see the moon hold sway  
and my questions fall  
into an ocean of grass  
the fireflies burn and fade over.

Ten years in Japan;  
I hear my parents singing  
my name through the pine trees  
and I'm lost in a forest,  
looking for the source.

Japan has risen over my life like a moon.  
Home can never be one place.  
But these stars too,  
these mountains,  
these children whose eyes  
are full of Japan, my children,  
who reach through night and day  
to hold me in the soft  
enclosure of their illuminating love.

## *Finders Keepers*

I picked him off the floor where he lay crying  
wrapped around your ankles at the sink  
and kept on with the arguing –  
his head resting on my shoulder  
growing heavier as the words came  
to me with ever increasing speed,  
violence tipped with anger  
at you for defying me – and on  
we went, tearing the house down  
as the weight grew heavier  
in my arms, until it was too much,  
screamed out, near hoarse,  
I had to go to the couch  
and lay our sleeping boy down  
in a room grown suddenly small  
enough for us to begin searching together  
for the one blanket he wanted us to find.

## *Skylight*

Because she prays one way  
and her husband prays a different way,  
a different faith, *it follows*,  
the doctor on CNN is telling the world,  
*their children will be confused.*  
When I turn the television off,  
it's early morning in Japan.  
I'm walking through the dark bumping  
first into the table and then the chair  
before reaching the door and sliding it open  
to find my family on the floor  
asleep beneath futons  
that lift around their breathing  
and stretch away under the moon like waves.  
We are of different faiths and races,  
our nationalities are different too, and yes,  
I could remain awake for hours  
to toss and turn around the news  
of what awaits our children  
but thankfully I have these stars  
and children sleeping soundly  
their faces turned toward the light  
that travels through the universe  
to be with us so perfectly confused.