

Pelican Auspex

for Warren Argall

Seeing the pelicans at bay, I watch
from latticed windows to catch
their tilt and swoop, tack
and lording over middle air,
attendant on the buff and suck
of every breeze. I sit and watch
to feel
their falling
down . . .
teasing the call of water, until
round . . . curving around . . .
all elegantly groping for the golden margin of a darkening hill.

I see them all so excellently fair;
I see,
stare,

until there are no evening acrobats,
or gold,
there:

just an awkward pelican, groping
in the dark passages, and coping
with the buff and bloody suck of a paralysing chair.



Will Christie

Adam to Eve

Unto this wilderness in clay succumb,
Wholly.

Take sanctuary in these awkward twists
Of nerve

And sinew I've named arms; and on this whorl
Of tendon,

Bone, and cartilage — my shoulder — cushion,
And be calmed.

This hard accommodation's all I've left
To offer

When hurricanoes rage inside your head
Or heart.

And yet, succumb to these rough-hewn
Fragilities

As embodiments, and you will find them
Prodigal

Of love; will know this wilderness a paradise
Of enough.



Will Christie

Ideas to Order

for Wallace Stevens

Within a dream of sea, alone, where waves
Became deep furling walls, encroaching
On the shore to sound, in foam and eddying,
The oldest whisper of mortality and time
Which time and tide had ever known,
I heard your voice, enchanting, in an arc
Of spray, the finest that had ever played
For me around a wave in air; I caught
Your image for a moment, iridescent
In the rising sun that conjured you in lustre,
Splendidly, from out the past and sea.

O meistersinger, master mariner,
Forgive me that at once I knew, not just
What you had won for us, but what had lost
In venturing too far into a sea
Whose restless cossetting, whose folding
And unfolding, never strayed as far
As this ill-natured and ancestral shore.
The singing tide that turns exquisitely
Upon itself to set us free, you said,
To plunge triumphantly and ride at will,
Runs also into castles made of sand
Whose thirst for song is never satisfied.



Will Christie

The medallions illustrating these poems are drawn after George Ferguson, *Signs & Symbols in Christian Art*, Oxford, 1961