

TWO POEMS BY ELIZABETH GOURLAY

Song for a Merman

widgeons on the waves awash
a whimbrel flies the wind
the yellow legs, the phalarope
are nowhere to be seen
triangular as sailing yachts
the herring gull's white wing
the cormorant the golden eye
are riding on the green
along the beach the sandpipers
run with the running sand

go dry your eyes the godwits cry
on the white wave pin a song
for none will know the name you tell
the wind will drag it down
the avocets the dotterells
are flying with the terns
the harlequin dives out of reach
the dowitcher alone
the widgeons swim above their graves
and the whimbrel has no song

Proof

Contemplating the eternal question
I have taken my pale candle
held it close beside you, Plato
there was a mirror behind
and in front of us
wheels within wheels
boxes
and the man with the box holding up his hand
and on that box
a man
holding up his hand with a box in his hand
time space sky trees
whirling
wind mills clouds engines turning
men and women running
waiting
boys swivelling in barber chairs
looking peering hoping
always the imitation behind the imitation behind the imitation
always in between
the ledge
jetting out the final vision
a thousand flashing photographs
a thousand separate motions
a thousand different lights
trusting
that the vital will leap out
beyond the ghostly negative
but there is only
one final reproduction
the rosy infant flesh
the wax upon the blackened bed
the double axe who cuts and cuts and cuts again