

**KATYA GIRITSKY**

---

**South Court**

William Carlos Williams  
wrote  
of sweetness  
of ripe plums  
but what he saw  
was there  
beside the contagious hospital

I don't go there

beside the criminal courts  
however  
we had seen  
a hawk alighting on a lamppost  
clutching a half-eaten snake  
Quetzalcoatl  
against the pale blue spring twilight sky

mortality is always in your face

in the basement  
in the lock-up  
there's a sign  
a drawing of a man  
hanging from a noose  
in a circle with a slash across it  
"No Suicides"

there had been prior bad incidents

## **On Teaching Gang Law Seminars**

we only talk about trying  
to clean up the messes left behind  
when children too young to drive  
spend their after school hours  
shooting at each other  
with real guns

we never talk  
about how young they look  
sitting in court  
skin still baby fine and tight  
under the shaved hair  
under the tattoos  
under the shackles

## **The Meaning of Stories**

On this  
the stories are always  
very specific:  
catching the firebird is not a task  
for the timid  
or easily burnt

injuries result that way  
caution is required  
and a good measure of cunning and luck  
dispensed by a benevolent deity  
and not to be taken lightly

nor are the instructions  
to be taken lightly  
deviations are not permitted  
mistakes can be fatal  
and second chances are not allowed

yet for some reason in the story  
they always get a second chance  
and a third  
they make the same mistakes over  
and over again and every time  
the gray wolf's there to save them

what are the stories trying to tell us?  
pay no attention to the warnings?  
make mistakes  
forget the rules

and if you're lucky  
someone will appear  
and save you?

or is the message simply  
don't try this at home  
you will burn your fingers  
your mistakes will be fatal  
there is no gray wolf in your forest

## **Park La Brea Tarpits**

returned to the tar pits today again  
stood pressed against the fence  
across the street the billboards stand  
poised to grab pedestrians who scurry past

I watch another bubble burst

while February rain clouds from the west  
crawl like purple sea monsters  
toward unsuspecting hills

## **Summer Solstice**

there is a little death that happens  
every year this time

expansion stops  
and for one brief painful moment  
there is perfect balance  
before the year slides  
toward the contraction of winter

I too begin to withdraw  
turn inward  
explore the pathways of the soul

there are labyrinths enough in me  
to fill the wanderlust  
of many winter months  
mazes enough  
to lose myself for an eternity  
of winter nights

at the peak of summer  
I feel winter in me  
and darkness  
and cold

in the heat of summer  
I long for a warm fire  
a deep chair  
for shelter from the winter storms

## Fishing for Li Po's Moon

trying  
to write poetry  
is like fishing  
for moonlight  
with nets

there's something  
about the rocking  
motion of the boat  
the *whoosh*  
of nets through darkness  
the way  
that moonlight  
fragments  
on the water

that almost  
makes you think  
that this time  
this particular  
time unlike all  
the other times  
you'll have something  
to show for the effort

some impression  
of accomplishment  
something  
more than a wet net

something more than moonlight  
fragmented  
reflecting on water

## **Afterward**

**we are all born of the stuff  
forged in cataclysms  
of dying stars**

**what exactly is it  
about us  
that dies?**

