

BRINKSMANSHIP

Your eyes are either open or closed,
So that you either see or you don't see
The bones at the bottom.
The centrifuging semicircular fluids,
The reflex flailings, your spectacles flying off,
The oh-my-God-what-have-I-done,
They're there; but
If you are one who sees the bottom bones, and
If you are half the man,
You stop right there --
Gravity be damned --
And you pick, say, Columbus,
And you float down, o! g!
At the same rate;
But all the time you're watching Columbus,
So that you land with a gentle jar
That knocks the shit out of you.

A little warier this time,
You hang about the edge,
And, even though no one's watching,
You take off again.
This time you pick, say, Orville Wright.

You come to admire the terrain.

There's Frank ("Crazylegs") Roosevelt --

A full gainer with a three-and-a-half twist off the Democratic platform.

There's Icarus and Blood and Guts,

Both melted on the wing.

There's Martin Luther King and Daniel,

Sitting at the soda fountain, grinning - actually grinning - at the cool cats.

There's Robin Hood and there's Bill Tell's boy - there're the greatest.

You come to remember your first time.

Mother was holding you, and you were holding her.

Her breasts were so soft

And her lips so smooth on your cheek

And her stomach so warm

That you straightened your knees,

Tugging on the end table,

And you picked, say, the bunny rabbit

In the corner by the television,

And you took off.

You didn't get the bunny rabbit,

And you landed with a gentle jar

That knocked the warm, smooth soft right smack out of you.

The thing that gets you now is Columbus.

That son of a bitch lived in the right time and the right place.

Nowadays everybody knows the world is round.

So you hang around at the edge,

Waiting till the boss is impatient,

Waiting till you can't possibly get it done,

And you take off, all the time watching Columbus,

And you tell the boss a good joke,

And you and he are pals,

So that you land with a gentle jar,

But it's a drag, a big drag.