

## DEAN PHELPS

### THE GIRL AT PARMA CHURCHYARD

What do I do with these two lives  
but bring them both to you, she said,  
since he is gone and unforgiving too.  
She reached to touch the painted robe  
and shivered in the cold twilight,  
belly too swollen to close her coat,  
and stared upward at the sightless eyes  
of the head down towering white Christ  
with one hand raised to bless or strike.

### STONE MEMORY

We learned his name but little else,  
and he remained a stranger in the town  
who would not stay close to hear  
an old man talking of his youth  
or give a penny for a blind man's ease,  
yet he would smile and nod at greetings  
on any side street where he walked.  
Some wondered if he had been scorned  
and so could not bend too easily,  
but most saw that as no excuse, sure  
he was twisted shoot from an unnatural root  
who would not give anyone deference  
because he held himself too far above  
to be bound by anyone's questioning,  
so he could just sing his own praise  
and forgive himself if it came to that.  
So when he died a few did come to watch  
him put down under a small gray rock  
where the mason cut his life in just two lines,  
and we drank his passing but not his memory,  
then stood silent in the October wind.

## SEA DREAMS

One of the children of the sea and air  
you laughed your paper boat away  
and saw it crumble in the tidal pool,  
then lifted the soggy mangled shape  
and held the remnant up for me,  
the disappointment plain upon your face  
at the way the imaginary journey failed.  
So, together we made another boat  
and you engineered the process  
and I folded along the lines you  
told me were the best to make it go,  
then set in on the course you chose.  
But I, a rover too, could tell its fate  
and knew your heart must learn  
that intentions sometimes are conceit,  
and the second trip was like the first.  
You wanted the next one made of wood,  
but I said tomorrow would be soon enough,  
and going home you finally took my hand,  
and there I had to show you the piece  
we'd make it of before you went to bed.  
Now, in the silence of your room  
I see the resolution soften at my touch,  
know what will come has already begun,  
and in your name and mine the sea  
sounds will ebb and flow in dreams  
but leeward you are safe in sleep.

