

*“In the Days When Wishing Helped . . .”*

*the opening of The Frog Prince  
by the Brothers Grimm*

Those days will come again, I promise you,  
as surely as the whitecaps spread their plumes  
along the shore, as surely as sparrows  
pouring out their pearls of freedom  
to purify our troubled inward shores

where deep in childhood we were taken by  
a dark enchantment cloaked in rationals,  
an iron grip that wears a fashionable glove  
changing styles to suit our innocence,  
choking even our dying into a dull issue.

But final fact is unreducible,  
and like a very private friend,  
a quiet, rising wind forever calling  
through tangled fields to find the forgotten gate,  
brambled over with blackberry, to swing it wide  
over the hidden canyon's threading stream  
and stir beneath our life, the wish to *be*.

If we are honest,  
the way we live is almost inconceivable.  
I tried to imagine blundering sparrows,  
blinded by dawn, but couldn't picture it.  
We know, inside, our only hope for life  
is beating back against the shallow surf,  
across the currents where the false boats glide,  
over the freeways of the wrong quotidian,  
reclaiming our souls, our senses, and our wish,  
even from God, if need be.

The search, our own,  
and yet the others trailing in our wake  
imagining they are (or actually are) our pilots,  
enchanted, frozen in their own routines,  
their inner eons crying out in silence.  
After adventures more intense  
and more bewildering than any book,  
they, too, shall be made whole, by love embraced,  
kissed poignantly to life: their manes, their tails,  
their oinks dissolved, as if they never were.

The wish to be,  
once a living presence, now a faint  
whisper, without face or body,

is sealed hermetically inside our myths,  
while prancing its costume as if we knew the wearer  
or scorned to flatland in a fairy tale  
where only the children can make it work,  
who in their grownup dreams remember  
how beautiful, how serious, and with  
what power the wish revivifies our life,  
drives through the hollows of our mortal peril  
before, in ignorance we lock it up  
in basements or in attics like old toys.

More than anything just now  
I would this poem could make you weep, to flood  
the living sand anew, where every pebble,  
every feather, every raveled edge  
of beaded foam that's ebbing back to sea  
is crystal clear, as if the sky were open.

The cups we live in fill from other fountains,  
outweighing even oceans, more unfathomed;  
we may never know how rich, how inexhaustible  
our possibilities. We paddle routinely  
to the surface, mimicking the poet's  
“...beaded bubbles winking at the brim...”  
as if it were an easy story,  
or something unacceptable that's denied.  
Somehow we know that neither mask is true.

The days when wishing helped will come again,  
are here already because we wished it so.  
The modest clover cradled in the dew  
touches us from inaccessible heavens;  
from friend or stranger an unexpected look,  
whatever is struck that resonates within,  
awakens our being, whether or not we suffer.

The ancient whales laboring in the seas  
utter sounds of innocence beyond our logic.  
May their souls be tended by those on high,  
and may our beings be moved, ever more deeply moved.