Three Poems 159

Stone Girls

One of Rodin's models. Who knows What she was thinking

When she rolled on the studio floor and spread her thighs So widely, to become *Iris*,

Messenge of the Gods — her bronze labia Glittering darkly in flight.

Or the girl who shocked Eleusis that night. Did she want to see herself

As others could see her? She was anyone, Among the initiates

Winding beside the sea, whose waves Were glimmering with spirits,

Until she dropped her robe and went for a swim. She came out grinning.

But the keepers of the Mysteries were not amused. This Was sacrilege. The sentence, stoning.

She was like, sorry, I just wanted to be myself! They didn't care. It didn't matter

That her breasts were tipped with platinum Before she dove,

160 Robert Hahn

Balanced briefly
In a pose that showed how ethereal

A body could be, like moonstruck marble, Like a stele by starlight.

Mt. Auburn Posthumous Poem

Winslow Homer is my neighbor here,
In "the great white city of the Dead,"
As Emily Dickinson called it. And Margaret Fuller
Or at least a plaque with her name on it.
And here in my own row, the great gad-fly,
The journalist I.F. Stone.
Remember him? No?

Three Poems 161

From "Tales of the Prayer Messenger Service"

1.

A Sunday afternoon in July. Dead still. Heat near a hundred, humidity, forget it. Weather so bad it was news. *Use caution today,* Advised the *Globe.* I went out running anyway.

The streets were empty, as if the city Had fallen ill or was under a baleful spell, As I ran down to the river's edge and the bridge Where Harry Houdini had dangled in chains

And escaped, in a miracle of his arrangement. But today, nothing. Heat haze. Blank white space. Then as I crossed over, a second figure was inked in. I saw him standing at the rail. He was looking up

2.

At three kites flying In the upper air, tethered to wispy lines,

His arms raised, his palms lifted, Two lines tied to his wrists

And one to the rail. But how had he broken vacancy's spell?

He stood there like a conductor Summoning brassy chords.

The kites soared in the air. Was he even there?

162 Robert Hahn

I saw no one else. No other runners. No scavenging drunks

Or curled-over bikers or whisking skaters Or lovers lying on the grass, to embrace

In the open, as if they wanted a witness To being so moved. Only three wishes,

Red, yellow, and orange, three sprites Emblazoned with black tiger's eyes,

Three young brothers, with ordeals ahead, three Little sisters tumbling from the wings to keep

Us company the rest of the way. Three hot kisses To wake us from sleep. Three kites in the wind,

3.

A wind that was up there, somewhere, it had to be. So I crossed to the other shore with the word

That the still air

still could stir And the irrepressible void be filled

and her prayer

Be answered, to see Another season

when leaves would be lacquered yellow and orange and red and go sailing through the air.