

David F. Smith: Selected Poems

A Wedding Prayer

From somewhere in heaven the wide and wondrous wings
On which our youthful hopes once soared so high
Have brought to us the sound of sacred strings
And made sure our dream of love will never die.
In this moment prearranged by those above
We join our hands to cup the flame of love.
May that small light that touched us from afar
Now guide our life together as our star.
Our dreams were meant to live, in God's own sight,
And by His grace this prayer is heard tonight:
May wings of angels lift our souls in flight.

For Jeanne

June 28, 1997



A REFUSAL TO MOURN THE DEATH, BY ADULTERY, OF HIS SECOND MARRIAGE

(from Kellner and the Gulf, with apologies to the memory of Dylan Thomas)

*Never until the mankind making
Wedding bouquet flower
Fathering and all humbling darkness
Tells with silence the last vow breaking
And the still hour*

Is come to tongues wagging in harness

*And I must bear for the last time the profound
Depression of divorce decreed
And the misery of love forlorn
Shall I let pray the shadow of a sound
Or sow my salt seed
In deposition transcripts to mourn*

*The litigious burning of this marriage's death.
I shall not murder
The mankind of her going with a grave truth
Nor try to squelch her arrogant attorney's breath
With any further
Elegy of innocence and youth.*

*Deep with the first wife lies East Hampton's daughter,
Robed in a Vera Wang gown,
A face lifted beyond age, the blue eyes of her mother,
Secret by the unmourning water
Of Long Island Sound.
After the first divorce, there is no other.*



THE GULF

(from Kellner and the Gulf)

*The first faint streaks of the next day
Lean over the flat land.
The ragged palms are not ready;
They are tired, and there is nothing new.
The prehistoric birds are heavy and too large.
The warm breath of the gulf is inescapable.*

*The air was here yesterday;
A heavy, sulfurous haze.
The water is warm, like bathwater;
It does not freshen or purify.
It does not pound the shore in defiance,
But sloshes on indifferent sand.
Pelicans plunge through orange skies*

*And slam into flat water;
A silver flash writhes down a stretching neck.*

*The red tide was a warning.
Ten thousand fish swollen on a perfect beach,
The sand the powder of a billion bones,
The gulf a solvent to hasten their decay.*

*The earth does not cool from day to day;
More days come, before peace with the last.
More days wash over me
Like the pathetic, lukewarm waves of the gulf.*

*They come from all the world to walk here;
Their swollen bodies redden under unforgiving rays.
They photograph the screaming sky.*

*The palm fronds droop listlessly;
The tall grasses do not stir.
The sun is swallowed by the infinite horizon;
Darkness comes, but the heat remains.
The light will claw its way back over me
After another long night of strange dreams.*

*A grotesque blue heron as tall as a man
Stares with hideous hazel eyes.
He swims slowly in the heavy air
And patiently stalks his unsuspecting prey
Beside the waiting waters of the gulf.*

