TO A DIABETIC

by

Mary Wood

Omnipresent, your disease sends shoots
to root in every limb, insinuating itself
in your anchored organs, to metamorphose
into masterpieces of horror that make food
for medicinal thought by indifferent medicine men.
You are guilty of what you must bear
and try to sever your head from the burgeoning
bludgeoning awareness of body, but with each shot
taken you beg for your life and you live
on your knees denying your own revolution.

Uncoiling from your dreams you rise
to injections in your thighs and buttocks,
your diabetic years are holidayless.
The only alcohol you know is on the swab
you use to wipe your tender skin before
and after plunging in the insulin.
You in your touching sexed virginity
go on getting raped twice a day
by a costly different needle every time.
Variety is the spice of life they say
though it kills you much too slowly.

Too young to be so old and too young to die
one day you stop. But they find you lying
in your velvety coma and affix you
to sinuous tubes and red blinking lights.
A slave to your body, reeling in nets of pain
you are a fisherman and wholly consumed
by the flesh you would sell down the river
disowned.
A PORTRAIT

by

Mary Wood

Our sallow colonel is old-skinned and limp-haired, a criminal with beady military eyes and an embarrassed nose beyond which he sees nothing. We know the method in his meanness as he shrivels invisibly.
TREE-TRUCKER

by

Mary Wood

Trees like bodies in ditches
tangle-twist aimlessly and wither
rootless in the sun
severed from their wellspring,
they are not ambulatory amputees
and cannot cry out immobile anguish.

Trucks with Fruehauf mud-flaps
lumber away down sinuous ribbon-roads
satinized by the sap of unmourned trees,
and though we will never be so ancient,
we are sorry
for nothing.
SOUR SAINT

by

Mary Wood

He is a sour saint with one abnormal ear and he catches paint on canvas like a child with an untended wall. His eyes bulge inward on his scarecrow face which is stretched like doeskin on his bones and shiny like empty glass shards. Like Lazarus, he eats what is given, and he cannot afford a northern light.

One day he comes to see Van Goghs, slithering past guard and chain with a careless knife which screams as it slashes priceless portraits. Feeling whole, he walks away from a world who would dismember him. But the master knows, and does not condemn.
SEASONED STRAITJACKETS
by
Mary Wood

These past ten years they screamed
at times with closed mouths Living in houses
like straitjackets A decade of elbows
held waist-tight and knees hugging themselves
like an earnest applicant's.

Meals met with healing silences were chipped
away by the brat borne into their spaceless
privacies And fastnesses of selftime
were shorn to drown in squalling breastfed
demanding phases An island heard and reared.

When their money could buy time and space
the child their mortality sought his own
And they echoed internally after he'd flown
Casting about for a grandness greater
than themselves to dedicate their deaths to.
I HAVE STAINED YOU
by
Mary Wood

I have stained you
with looking-glass tears
over willfully animate objects.
You glistened lightly
like a cathedral window
through which I could not see
into myself.

I am the animator
of willful objects
though they strike only me.
You ridicule me
for the pine cones I say fall
to make me bend to pick them up,
for the bed sheets clean
blown off the line by the wind
into muddy creeks I say
the wind wants no one's sheets
but mine as sacrifice.

You and the wind you laughed
as you held me in the cage of your arms.
I screamed I would kill you
and choked on my crow-words.
I subsided.
Weak family chins
make him see double
and balding
he looks beyond his years.
for the lying of the leaves.
One by one
they tremble down
he counts them when he chooses
knowing that they signify
the losing of each hair.

She has given in too much
and to an impolite man.
His millions keep her
whispering outside the door
he rents out the house they live in.
The sons she bore him pained her
and he blamed her as they grew
greedy as himself.
He willed her back to bed
to age alone
and cancerous he roamed.

Deaf in one ear
she is half inaudible
and the children whisper round her
to see if she will hear.