

## 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 velvetized 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.



## LOSSES

by

Mary Wood

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.