

Siren Song

This is the one song everyone
would like to learn: the song
that is irresistible:

the song that forces men
to leap overboard in squadrons
even though they see beached skulls

the song nobody knows
because anyone who had heard it
is dead, and the others can't remember.
Shall I tell you the secret
and if I do, will you get me
out of this bird suit?
I don't enjoy it here
squatting on this island
looking picturesque and mythical
with these two feathery maniacs,
I don't enjoy singing
this trio, fatal and valuable.

I will tell the secret to you,
to you, only to you.
Come closer. This song

is a cry for help: Help me!
Only you, only you can,
you are unique

at last. Alas
it is a boring song
but it works every time.

Margaret Atwood

Margaret Atwood, "Siren Song" from *Selected Poems 1965-1975*. Copyright © 1974, 1976 by Margaret Atwood.
Reprinted with the permission of the author and Houghton Mifflin Company.

Source: *Poetry* (February 1974).

The Piano Speaks

BY SANDRA BEASLEY

After Erik Satie

For an hour I forgot my fat self,
my neurotic innards, my addiction to alignment.

For an hour I forgot my fear of rain.

For an hour I was a salamander
shimmying through the kelp in search of shore,
and under his fingers the notes slid loose
from my belly in a long jellyrope of eggs
that took root in the mud. And what
would hatch, I did not know—

a lie. A waltz. An apostle of glass.

For an hour I stood on two legs
and ran. For an hour I panted and galloped.

For an hour I was a maple tree,
and under the summer of his fingers
the notes seeded and winged away
in the clutch of small, elegant helicopters.

Source: Poetry (July/August 2009)

<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poem/236980>

The Flash Reverses Time

BY A. VAN JORDAN

DC Comics, November 1990, #44

“Never Look Back, Flash

Your Life Might Be Gaining On You”

When I'm running across the city
on the crowded streets
to home, when, in a blur,
the grass turns brown
beneath my feet, the asphalt
steams under every step
and the maple leaves sway
on the branches in my wake,
and the people look,
look in that bewildered way,
in my direction, I imagine
walking slowly into my past
among them at a pace
at which we can look one another in the eye
and begin to make changes in the future
from our memories of the past—
the bottom of a bottomless well,
you may think, but why not dream a little:
our past doesn't contradict our future;
they're swatches of the same fabric
stretching across our minds,
one image sewn into another,
like the relationship between a foot and a boot,
covariant in space and time—
one moves along with the other,
like an actor in a shadow play—
like a streak of scarlet light
across the skyline of your city

sweeping the debris, which is simply confetti,
candy wrappers, a can of soda,
all the experience of a day discarded
and now picked up
even down to the youthful screams of play
that put smiles on the faces of the adults
who hear remnants of their own voices
through a doorway leading back
to a sunrise they faintly remember.

A. Van Jordan, "The Flash Reverses Time" from *Quantum Lyrics*. Copyright © 2007 by A. Van Jordan. Used by permission of W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.

Source: *Quantum Lyrics* (W. W. Norton and Company Inc., 2007)