

DREAM

"Oysters are the answer."

– M.F.K. Fisher, Consider the Oyster

Last night I was oyster

whelmed and moored in sound fed by cool
Atlantic expanse

gorged green, deep cupped, plump, and happy.

I remember the time before

when I was spat and sounds of banqueting
shrimp lured me. Crackling like

digital fire or hand-cut bacon a lover fries in cast
iron the morning after,

fearless and shirtless, humming some jaunty
hymn.

I knew I'd be safe—those pistoled shrimp
speckled as magpie's eggs

didn't burrow in waiting for me. And I didn't
laugh at their cartoonish claw,

something only a god or child would fashion.

But did you know those asymmetric shrimp,

those tiny beacons of delicious possibility,

can shoot a bubble louder than thunder and hot
as the surface of the sun?

Well, almost as hot, but—

for a night, I was oyster

my ocean-worn shoulders whelmed and moored
in sound fed by

cool Atlantic expanse

and now I am woman who dances in an emerald
and schrol silk dress akin to

Carolina green-gill oysters waiting for

full moon.

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THE HORIZONTAL RAINBOW

Having never seen such a thing, I was unsure I
should

Believe my eyes that early in the morning, as I rode

West on my bicycle, aimless as a cloud, toward
what

I had never known existed, through what I thought
was

A sun shower falling from the morning sky as a light

Sprinkle, not enough to wet anything much, or
moisten

What it touched before evaporating on the
pavement.

Yet there it was, projected on a blinding cloud bank

White as fresh snow fallen on a faraway mountain
side,

A seemingly impossible form, shining not quite as
bright

As the spectrum, but a blurred focus horizontal
rainbow,

Cast by sun hitting ice crystals in a high distant
storm,

Otherwise invisible, except at the right angle of
incidence,

The hues, eliding together, each with its uncertain
name.

Vincent Joseph Kopp, 2025

THE PATRON SAINT OF AIRPORT SPARROWS

Now that I make the frequent arrivals

and departures of a child who grew up

and moved away from his parents,

who grow older and sicker and smaller

between visits, I feel too sad to read

while I wait for boarding to start

and instead head up to the gates

that are no longer used because the city

has also shrunk and see this little survivor

who was here the last time I left

and the time before that, feathers drab

as the well-traveled carpet but happy,

I'd like to think, in its world of fries

and burger buns, not lost, not half

regretting what must have been a decision

to thread itself through an open door

into a life it could not imagine and away

from one it could not manage long

if it ever had to go back to it again.

James Davis May

*This poem was originally published in The Sun in
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THE ART OF FUTILITY—

Every poet has had the experience of a promising draft losing its promise. Sometimes the change is as dramatic as an explosion, but more often than not it's a slow disintegration, with the draft being regulated to some cobwebbed corner of our imaginations. One strategy to revive these poems is to draw on the peculiar strength a poem gains when it acknowledges and even embraces its limitations and shortcomings. In this workshop, we'll explore multiple ways that a poem, and its author, can succeed by admitting failure.

James Davis May

Workshop on 10/18, 6:30pm at The Century Center, 100 North Greensboro Street

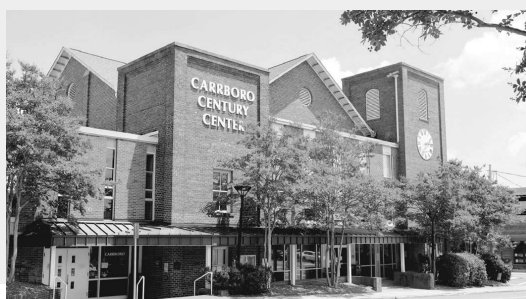


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