

## Detroit General Hospital

(From The Detroit Song Book)

The sirens shroud his screams — mouth open in  
 a silent howl while blood ticks from him on the sheet.  
 Guts hugged in by a rag. "My god! My god!"  
 Tires skirl, the twirling blinker winks like a flame and then  
 goes out. His time is almost out.  
 The nurses strap their secret on a cot.

The moment came too quick. Anger. Threat.  
 Fear and sweat sent numbness to the brain and heart  
 like a snort. He never thought — what's next?  
 Lost his chance to look You in the face unmasked.  
 A shutting down and not a breaking  
 out. Drugs and contraptions rob him blind.

Think. It can be only one time done.  
 Us all want, after all, nicht wahr, n'est pas?  
 We, waning, hunger for the first time's fire,  
 gone crazy for what's new, but it just ain't the same.  
 Here's something you can bet on, pal:  
 Don't miss the last first thing you'll ever do.

O once we heard the whacking of an ax  
 grow still as we together hugged like seedlings in a van,  
 going back to nature in the National Park,  
 and in the night and in the dawn we did the old trick  
 over. Brushed our mouths clean in  
 a running brook, eyes stung by the embering wood.

Fern and willow did not weep their dew  
 for us and do not worry to repeat — each exploit  
 new, each root sent out a frontier crossed.  
 The sparrows — say! — they swarm and thrive. You'd  
 think the very gravel keeps these chits alive.  
 With them there is no fashion nor a clock.

We drove our romance out beyond the law.  
 The tires squealed to bring it back to town unbroke.  
 You whimpered "It's the first time." Always is.  
 Ache for the breaking of the pod that gives the pollen  
 its adventure, gift of smoke  
 like poppies flaring out against the field.

John R. Reed

## On Hearing the Latest Scientific News About the Mona Lisa

In Japan a heart specialist declares  
 He can explain your inscrutable smile.  
 I hardly dare believe my ears. You suffered,  
 It seems, from high cholesterol.  
 The yellow spot in your eye gave you away.  
 And now I wonder: Were you Jewish, after all,  
 Gorging chopped liver and cheese cake  
 On the sly? At some Italian version of the Neville?  
 It makes sense, I must admit. And so there you sit,  
 Looking as if you were alive, just after lunch.  
 I put down my corned beef sandwich  
 And give another look. Suddenly the whole world  
 Has a different slant. At last history  
 Is reduced to a wink and we see each other  
 Across the table eye to eye.

Sanford Pinsker