

## **James Nicola – Three Poems**

### **[And all that All]**

And all that All  
has ever been:  
the junkyard dog  
chained out in back

with just enough give  
on his leash to make  
him proud to think  
he catches his own food.

### **The Forgotten**

There was a Sappho once who never loved  
and never wrote. A Petrarch with no Laura.  
A Shakespeare who never did get to London.  
The greatest cellist in the world was born  
years before the cello. One Socrates  
never taught a Plato. And there was  
a Carpenter too shy to hang in public

or gather in a crowd, though kind and wise,  
whom fate did not cast in a jail with an  
amanuensis for a jailer. We  
control all that we can control, no more.  
I have done all I can, descendants, world,  
and keep on doing, that is all I can,  
that you or someone might remember—

Ah, you'll join us all, all the forgotten,  
in the land that time and times forgot, where we  
shout unheard, love unrequited, and  
it doesn't matter; where Shakespeare hawks  
another sonnet sequence, tinkers with  
drafts till he gets them right; where, freed of flesh,  
we all love everyone, and all the time.

### **Sheeler's Stairs**

Intrepid stairway  
to the upper-lower place  
of where we think-feel-dream,

like the Native guide  
familiar Who brings us to  
the edge of alternate realms—

plateau or dale,  
attic or basement,  
penthouse or thirsty dungeon,

blazing firmament  
or  
cooling tomb—

then leaves us,  
not for craven hesitation  
but by definition—by design:

for the entering and going  
can only be  
Our Own.

Charles Sheeler photographed and painted  
industrial roofscapes—and stairways

**James B. Nicola's** poems have appeared recently in *Muddy River Poetry Review*, the *Antioch*, *Southwest* and *Atlanta Reviews*, *Rattle*, and *Poetry East*. His nonfiction book *Playing the Audience* won a “Choice” award. His two poetry collections, published by Word Poetry, are *Manhattan Plaza* (2014) and *Stage to Page: Poems from the Theater* (2016). [Sites.google.com/site/jamesbnicola](http://sites.google.com/site/jamesbnicola).