

E. Martin Pedersen – Two Poems

The Great American West

Flying over Utah
I see the creases
in my shirt
folds of slacks.

Nevada in the dark
the reflex of the white line
pointing out of state
in either direction.

Golden hills of a distance
tree tops out of range
the most handsome beaches
are 100 ft. down the cliffs
littered by the sea
spitting back stuff
caught in the teeth
of California.

Good shoes are needed
to take on Colorado
the clean state
with the nasty undertow
from the rocky coast
pushing bikers up hill.

A dun horse would be happiest
a blue shirt would be happiest
red iron is happiest
an egg salad sandwich
and short trees growing tough
happiest in Wyoming.

And finally Arizona,

Mohave enough.

Palmyra Remembered

Alone in the ruins of a city left
walking the streets listening to the ghastly ululation
these stiff columns and walls and pavement here
are why I came so far into the desert;
Other cities fell and were taken
down, apart, and put back together
new cities on the old
legos.

Why spend weekdays and weekends chipping stone
and then leave it useless in its place,
move it over here and I'll make my house from it –
I like recycling, it's clean, it imitates nature.
You see them walking the avenue
growing old, making love, being born again
carried in and out of doors.

The last fifteen years of my life
have been dedicated
memorizing the history of my kin folk
caulking the dike, so to speak
standing with few others placing heavy blocks of stone in the shallows
to hold back the sea, preserve the shore
beautiful blocks stolen from the ruins,
When it seems that everyone else wants to bury them
to make ugly new houses above.

They might be right
but if the old city disappears
where will the ghosts sleep tonight?

E. Martin Pedersen, a San Franciscan, has lived in eastern Sicily for over 35 years. He teaches English at the local university. His poetry has appeared in *Verse-Virtual*, *Frigg*, *Literary Yard*, *Strong Verse*, *Ink Sweat & Tears* and others. Martin is a 2011 alum of the Squaw Valley Community of Writers.