TO SPIN IS MIRACLE CAT

Poetry by Roger Zelazny

With a foreword by Ursula Le Guin

UNDERWOOD-MILLER
San Francisco, California
Columbia, Pennsylvania
1981
To Spin Is Miracle Cat
To Spin Is Miracle Cat

Poetry by
Roger Zelazny

with a foreword by
Ursula Le Guin

UNDERWOOD-MILLER
San Francisco, California
Columbia, Pennsylvania
1981
TO SPIN IS MIRACLE CAT


Copyright © 1981 by The Amber Corporation
Foreword copyright © 1981 by Ursula K. Le Guin

An Underwood/Miller Book by arrangement with the author.
All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in
any form or by any electronic or mechanical means including
information storage and retrieval systems without explicit per-
mission from the Author or the Author's agent, except by a
reviewer who may quote brief passages. For information address
the publisher.

Printed in the United States of America
All Rights Reserved

FIRST EDITION

"Lobachevsky's Eyes" originally appeared in Doorways in the Sand by
Roger Zelazny, copyright © 1976 by Roger Zelazny.

The poems "Ducks "; "Nuages"; "Testament"; and "Tryptych" have
also been previously published.
To Jeanne and Ron Dobler
CONTENTS

FOREWORD by Ursula Le Guin .......................... 11

Recent

LOCKER ROOM ........................................ 15
DANCE .................................................. 16
SONG ..................................................... 17
SONNET, ANYONE? .................................... 18
SPRING MORNING: MISSIVE ....................... 19
AUGURY ............................................... 21
TO HIS MORBID MISTRESS ....................... 23
EVANGEL ............................................. 24
LOBACHEVSKY'S EYES ................................. 25
555-1212 ............................................. 26
HANDS ............................................... 28
WALL .................................................. 29
TORLIN DRAGONSON ................................ 30
PARANOID GAME .................................... 31
RIPTIDE .............................................. 33

1955-60

AWAKENING ........................................... 37
NUAGES ............................................... 38
CACTUS KING ......................................... 39
TESTAMENT ........................................... 40
STORM AND SUNRISE ............................... 41
FROM A SEAT IN THE CHILL PARK ............... 42
DUCKS ................................................ 43
PAINTPOT ............................................ 44
THE LAST ............................................ 45
ST. SECAIRE'S ....................................... 46
ICEAGE .................................................. 47
THE GOD AND FRUSTRATE SHRINE .................. 48
THE GAME'S THIRTEENTH STRIKE .................... 49
STORM .................................................. 50
TRYPTYCH ............................................. 51
NIGHT OF FISTING .................................... 52
RODIN'S 'THE KISS' ................................... 53
CHORUS MYSTICUS ..................................... 54
SPINNING THE DAY THROUGH MY HEAD ............ 55
FRIEND .................................................. 56
NAMELESS GRAVE BY A NAMELESS SEA, PROBABLY GREEK 57
SHADOWS .............................................. 58
SENTIMENTS WITH NUMBERS ......................... 59

More Recent

I WALKED BEYOND THE MIRROR ...................... 63
DREAMSCAPE .......................................... 64
PHILIP K. DICK ....................................... 66
TO SPIN IS MIRACLE CAT ............................. 68
FOREWORD

by Ursula Le Guin

Henry Moore at eighty leafs through a book of sketches of his baby grandson and says, "I draw in order to know. I know Gus very much better after drawing these, you see." Later in the interview (aired on PBS) he shows us drawings of roots, trunks, branches. "I love trees nearly as well as I love Gus. I draw them in order to see them. . . ." How shall we tell love from knowledge? How shall we tell the dancer from the dance? People insist upon a quarrel between science and religion, for the human craving for quarrels and compartments is insatiable; but as insatiable, and far more profitable, is the human craving for knowledge. If art is considered a form of knowledge, a means of learning to see, the quarrel evaporates and the compartments remain only as useful distinctions.

To very few artists is given the central, massive certainty of a Henry Moore, but all artists like to thumb their noses at the box-makers and dance with the buoyancy of Disney hippopotamuses across the boundaries drawn by anxious mapmakers of the mind.

Where a good many people are literate, poets may become the cautious members of this unruly chorus-line, keeping their
elbows close to their sides, careful where they put their feet. Poets deal in words, and so do we all. People who won't dance, and won't paint, and won't act, and won't whittle, and won't sew, and wouldn't even put tissue paper on a comb and hum The Bear Came Over the Mountain to entertain the baby, do talk.

And they write. They write advertising copy, technical specifications, interoffice memoranda, newspapers, shopping lists, love letters, poison pen letters, postdeconstructionist exegeses, and FUCK on brick walls. And thus, being word-users, they kind of keep crowding the poets. Some of the poets quite rightly respond by saying: We have nothing, nothing whatever to do with you; our words are entirely different from your words; you speak English, more or less, but we speak Poetry, and you may think you can judge us, but you can't. Fortunately, however, writing is not the only activity involved in being literate, and lo! light as the Disney hippos, thumbing their noses gallantly, come the readers, pirouetting over the boundaries, bouncing on the boxes people, even poets, build to hide in. Boldly they read what the poets write. What for? In order to know. They want to know more, they want to know better, they want to see the world, because knowledge is love; or, as Keats put it, beauty is truth, truth beauty.

Keats said that was all we need to know, but he said nothing about the business being easy, or safe. In poetry, there's nowhere to hide. Not for the rash poet, not for the gallant collaborator, the reader. Every word's a UXB; the flash when one goes off can illuminate the whole landscape of a heart, and the light is merciless. As for the white stuff between the lines, that's totally unsafe. A poem is a risk taken. A poem read is a risk shared. The thing about collaborating at risk is, it makes us aware that we may be lonely but are not alone; we're all in this together, often losing words to circle and movement to other leaves like trees to spin. . . .
To Spin Is Miracle Cat
Recent
LOCKER ROOM

You words damned well better do as you're told. Get in line. Sound sweet. Stay on your feet. When I need a pun I'll ask for it. Match sound to sense, sense to sound. Block that image of the wraparound windshield's revealing/concealing in sun's glare. Whatever's there needs care in the display. Technical honesty's the note for the day. Stop talking to each other. When I call, you come. When I say shit you say what color. Is that clear? Get back here! Words can't walk out on
DANCE

Any minute now
the words will replay themselves
within the mind's ear:
The clown and the singer
fail at last,
juggler of hearts
and crier at the sticking place
falter,
footing lost, voice broken,
embracing in the downward spinning,
and clown take up the cry,
falling caller
catch the dark staccato
laughter, netless
in the minute's eye.
SONG

When I learned the other day
that everything Emily Dickinson wrote
can be sung to the tune
of "The Yellow Rose of Texas"
I was crushed.
It was true.
I can no longer read Emily Dickinson
but Lone Star ghosts flit across the page,
the Alamo is not forgotten
and I hear the thundering hoofbeats
of the great horse Silver.

I wondered then
whether every person who pens a poem
has a tune,
a secret melody which will destroy him
if the word gets out.
A small thought, perhaps,
not quite as profound as it sounds;
and those who fool with vers libre
should be safer than most.
Yet the notion nags.
There's an awful lot of music in the world . . .

To be trapped by John Cage
or crushed by Leadbelly
would be bad enough.
But I have this nightmare
of being done in by a hymn.
If Rock of Ages gets me in the end,
mocked Emily's diamond eyes
may sparkle like the dew
in stillnesses that lie
between the words and the Word.
SONNET, ANYONE?

Save for Berryman's, who wants the sonnet?
— A fusty hangover from ages dark.
Take a thought, hang fourteen lines upon it,
Prime it and crank it, force it to a spark,
Then halting rhyme in pattern archaic,
Play with the choke until the engine sings
(Wondering when you'll get that certain kick),
A stilted song of common imagings.
While the oldfangled buggy, pushed with pride,
Jolted to a motion, at times repays
Mechanic hands, mostly it's a rough ride,
With that Model T we drive on Sundays,
Bumping down twisted country roads, my love,
Where each must go who has something to prove.
SPRING MORNING: MISSIVE

Recently
I have escaped Legionnaire's Disease,
lost a day, gained one,
and learned that the Emperor penguin
gets laid only once a year.
I have also spent time wondering
for whom the galaxies wheel
and the oceans thunder.
It has been a fairly busy spring.
You ask after my health.
It is there.
I can go many lines without metaphor or moral
to show my stamina.

I shook my head at the disease at first,
but it is probably its own fault.
Like the penguins
it must have let opportunities slip by.
As for the days,
I cheated.
I dropped one Datelining,
did a double-take on the way back,
landed on my feelings for a beat.
As for the metaphor,
Life is a pair of doxies
leaning over a bridge rail
seeing who can spit farther.
As for the moral,
ask not for whom the galaxies wheel
and the oceans thunder.

After all, sailors steer
by pieces of the one,
crossing the others,
black-tie birds
do something similar,
spit in the ocean
is a popular hand,
spit in he hand
much less so,
London Bridge has fallen
to Havasu Lake,
days without number
are devilish for diarists,
Legionnaires are falling down
the oceans’ wheel,
the galaxies’ thunder;
the day is much too bright,
too warm for thought,
but note, and again,
there’s no escape
from images unsought.
AUGURY

A fistful of entrails
makes all the difference in the world
at a time like this, oh king,
and these guts say you're in trouble.
It could be the lord chamberlain
or—God forbid!—the queen
that bears watching,
but the innards indicate the stranger.
The people themselves,
heirs to your benevolence,
typically ungrateful,
screaming for your head,
as usual,
have a new twist to their defiance.
They used to say it's wars, taxes
and the recent executions,
but now they're after
social security,
a 40-hour work week
with paid vacations,
workmen's compensation
and a comprehensive
medical-dental plan.
Now, that stranger in the dungeon
and the glowing bubble he came in—
We all know he's mad,
with his talk
of flying machines,
thinking machines,
killing machines,
but this segment, here,
ties him to the current unrest.
I believe he found an audience
before we got to him.
So it comes to this:
We must burn him as a sorcerer
or offer him a cabinet post.
Offhand, I'd recommend the latter.
You see, it's really a matter
of vocabulary.
His words have found them ills
they never knew they had.
So let him talk awhile
and place a moratorium
on the penning of dictionaries.
Drown his words in realities
and the next time they come by
it'll be his head,
like a grisly lollipop,
passing down the avenue.
Then give it a year, I'd say.
The people will forget the words,
saying it's wars, taxes
and the recent executions.
I feel it in my guts.
TO HIS MORBID MISTRESS

Two hundred-six bones,
held together with passion and flesh,
four hundred-twelve bones,
ditto,
cushioned against rattle and stress,
facing the future with a smile,
show entropy's got poetry inside.

Be my Valentine, awhile.
EVANGEL

The moth,
seeking a gateway to another dimension
where moths wear crowns,
trusts the flickering door atop the pillar.
Have I overlooked the comparison?
You, to whom I address these lines,
have asked for my trust.
I did not crawl out of my cocoon yesterday.
I came to pray; mocking, I stay.
LOBACHEVSKY'S EYES

Lobachevsky alone has looked on Beauty bare.
She curves in here, she curves in here. She curves out there.
Her parallel clefts come together to tease
In un-callipygianous-wise;
With fewer than one hundred eighty degrees
Her glorious triangle lies.
Her double-trumpet symmetry Riemann did not court—
His tastes to simpler-curvedness, the buxom Teuton sort!
An ellipse is fine for as far as it goes,
But modesty, away!
If I'm going to see Beauty without her clothes
Give me hyperbolas any old day.

The world is curves, I've heard it said,
And straightway in it nothing lies.
This then my wish, before I'm dead:
To look through Lobachevsky's eyes.
[It begins and ends,
that's what it does,
and then again begins,
with tremulous cadence slow,
usually getting me off the john
or out of the bathtub.
The eternal note of sadness
is what I call it,
among other things . . .]

Ask not for whom the bell tolls
and you often get stuck with a collect call,
as I that one from thee.

I suppose it's easier
to be a Number than an Islande,
but I resent the use of one
much more than the other
and wish to remain unlisted
though I've no objection to being mapped.

As any idiot with nothing to say
delights in calling to say it,
I eagerly await my diminishment in thee,
geographical anomaly,
    if continenthhood
be the best one can hope for.

** **

Yet, while it's doubtless difficult being
an Islande, the shrinkage does seem worth
the effort, J.D., if other reports bear true,
and I will keep at it.
The 17th Century having no number
I can reach, I am writing all this out
and would welcome any second thoughts
you may have had on the matter,
for it's hard (that's a little conceit)
much of the time,
and I would welcome
shrieking gulls, mindless surf, gutsy winds
in place of all these confused alarms,
tolling for, telling at,
belling after me.

*R.S.V.P. via bottle.*

cc: M.A.
HANDS

Where the last flag is raised
and the last body laid
two birds in a bush
and one in the hand
are equivalent no more.

*

The sound of one hand clapping
requires a face
for its fulfillment.

*

I never let the right
know what the left was was doing.
Consequently, I castrated myself
while opening a can of beans.

*

A Great Big Hand
For The Little Lady
came in through the window
and whisked her away.

*

The Devil finds work
for the idle,
such as this.
WALL

I would like to come and live in your utopia
where brotherhood, sisterhood, joy,
simple communal pleasures, each to every,
dancing, singing, studying, sacrifice,
group therapy, nationalized poverty,
healthy pacifism, modern dance,
lots of wholesome food, mass calesthenics,
cold showers, jogging, writing workshops
and maybe a little flagellation
add backbone to the salt of the earth,
so to speak.

I will build you a great long wall.
Give me your wretched refuse
who do not believe in all of the above.
We will cause them to stand
with their backs against the wall,
blindfolded, as they were blind to the truth,
and I will help to preserve your ideals,
for even the best of us need protectors
every now and then.
TORLIN DRAGONSON

Beneath my feet
grass withers.
Poison drips
from my lips.

I smash orchards,
burn churches,
sink sailors,
foul rivers.

I rend white knights,
raze castles,
gulp virgins,
breathe arsons.

But love's my hoard,
where gold's gleams
comfort me,
just like thee.
PARANOID GAME

Paranoia is fun.
I once thought of inventing a board game
with that name.
Roll the dice. Deuce.
Go two.
Draw a card.
Your cat has died
after eating the dinner's scraps.
Go to hospital. Have your stomach pumped.
Forfeit a turn.

The possibilities are endless.
Read the instructions:
Watch out! They are all around you.
I wouldn't be too quick with those dice.
Keep an eye on the other players.
Listen.
What you do not hear is also important.
Or see, or feel, or taste,
touch, smell or kinesthese;
one of the above;
or all of these.

It is a good day.
Sort of makes you wonder.
Don't be the first to move.
Neither a borrower nor a lender be.
One of the other players has instructions
for a different game.
It is called Manic-Depressive.
He/She is watching too, just now,
but the adrenalin is rising.
When things get desperate,
you could draw a card.
Or not.
Nobody wins, of course,
but the best loser
is undefeated in a certain spiritual sense.
The way out is to draw the black card,
though it may only say "Taxes".

Something is rotten,
but Dad's ghost on the castle wall
is not to be trusted either.
(Remember the stories he used to tell?)
Offhand, I'd say there's something to do.
But you never know.
Keep your eyes open, your feet on the ground.
If it feels right, don't do it.
Watch the other players watching.
RIPTIDE

Riptide and foristan. Tal vez, too. Vielleicht, perhaps.
I sometimes think of stories I have never written . . .
He has made it through the 470-meter navigable aperture
at the spinning disc-edge of a black hole
equivalent to eight solar masses.
(Clever computer, Anubis-like, to guide him.)
Now, telling the story,
a page from Descent into the Maelstrom,
as he flashes by,
he shows his alien audience
his own ship, this ship,
hanging there, bug-in-web-like,
upon the event horizon.
Grand final image.
(Or would photon-decay do it in?)

Didn't like it. Not really a story. Hence, nothing.
Except for that damned image . . .
Watching your own eternal doom. Cracking jokes about it . . .

One of the great pleasures of mortality, I suppose,
is knowing that others are suffering, too.
And of writing, that others have fragments
that drive them just as mad:

Medusa smiled . . .
God Owes Me $6.57 . . .
Itself Surprised . . .
The Cyborg Connection . . .
"Send them an Apocalypse Card."
"Think dead thoughts."
"You have ten minutes to fall in love."

The greatest argument I know for sadistic deities
is that inspiration comes in pieces
and some of them never fit.
Objective correlatives are nice things to have about, but these are untidy scraps that almost make it, and could, I suppose, correlate if they tried just a little harder. But they won't. After awhile you feel sure. It is from their species that I learned the true meaning of love-hate, a lesson one can usually do without. Somewhere deep within there may be a message, but they hung up before I got it.

There should be a divorce-getting, stake-driving process available, a rite of exorcism for not-quite-ideas that simply won't give up. Seizing them and strewing them across the ergosphere may be the only way. But if they were to make it through that damned aperture and return to show me themselves, bug-like, in the web of forces, waving—

Day of Homeothermy, The Man with the Wooden Heart, Startangle, Cheeterwing, Chuttle and Pocketstar—

I would . . .

Bleed upon them, I suppose, curse, send the tracenfeef, shiddoes and slugell off to the Quickwind where the Dweebles dwell to struff their guffs where the antiblob flarts before the Logrus. Even then, I wonder . . . There may be things of which I never shall be free, immortal as myself, bugging me down the ages, proof against revenge. My world is crowded and an alien valley. They sing against the closing of my eyes.
AWAKENING

As I watch the billion-nuanced dawn stream
through pages of my brain,
Like Loki screaming back to Asgard
with his hair afire,
I feel I have gotten upon the moment
three monsters which shall destroy the world:

My world, designed of ice,
looped in supple frame, gray,
And pillaring the heavens on furled cloth towers,
as still as the inside of a jewel,
Has shuddered to a sluggish consistency
with the crowing of a cock upon a dunghill;

The steps on a bridge, once broken,
heave the hateful rainbow
over my sea-son's home,
As Hel, my burning daughter,
all wisdom and half-corpse,
Stirs beside me now within the incestuous parabola
of a poorly reconstructed Faust
regretting a beautiful moment;

The sheet of flame has risen,
wall behind me now—
immolating cerement to better time—
As the mechanical ankles
of a man who has sired deity
paraphrase in numbed warmth away
The treading of a Wolf behind the icy sun.
NUAGES

Our Lady of Guadalupe
to thee we pray
Deliver us the living
Bless the souls of our ancestors
writhing in the Great Snake
on outward fits of day

Talk to the silent
Breathe on those without breath
Wreathe in greatnesses of grace
Thy sun-dog and his kin

who move through sand
in winnowings of coral
tide by sand
past apertures of star

Waft on high the mothers of our men
Bless them

who pry careers of molten sun-pearl
the open mouthed clamshells of cloud
CACTUS KING

It has been said that no land lies so vile
but kingship would console one's presence there;
no spit of Hell too small
for Lucifer to dwell supreme,
post-fall.

But Lord! the exile autocrat
imprisoned by such reign!
with two-edged sword of Proust
that pricks a will to power
(nettle of reply from out a fading past) –

as here, most lovely Bonaparte,
my master of the rocks,
we dub the bowing, red and cactus head.
TESTAMENT

Strange, that here I should think of you.
The ashes are not bitter,
nor the dust excessive.
There are no trees
to hold the three small beasts:
fear, shame, and mocking laughter . . .

but yesterday discomfort
fell black across this path,
sapping seas of innocence
I'd built in a waste:
diminutive dimples of darkness
slashed shadow to prairie dog's stare:

adjudicant, still angel cast of bowness,
preposition to fire, despair . . .
STORM AND SUNRISE

... machine of day pulling taffy.
FROM A SEAT IN THE CHILL PARK

Green wrestles yellow on that pillared island, scuffing occasional brown clods.
DUCKS

Landed by the bullet
the banded angel
breathes orison
her final wing
PAINTPOT

. . . perpetual spa of blue
where clouds boil and dip chameleon hue.
THE LAST

And sorely bites the blade
behind Cassandra brows!
Waters mirror murder, fuse
with care-cut faces, darken all
about the chariot of disbelief.

They will not hear the word,
truer than their thousand syllables’
beauty, but bear its black fins
wrapped in nets of apparentcy
upon their choral back;

and the ever gentle mutter
of cloth about rushings
works wordless concordance
with golden and double doors opened
to blood-struck Agamemon down.
ST. SECAIRE’S

Triple topped steeples
of brass,
steel,
and I forget what other —
poking with massive
and insect probosci —
suck a passing cloud,
prick to sudden star-wound
night’s most Negro thigh . . .

Ye I salute,
holiest of vampires!
bread of metaphor,
being,
and I know not what,
in many-topped minds
of the minder.
ICEAGE

O
why
the sky
so torturé

today? one says
aloud, quick finger
uncoiled sudden up over
their heads. They touch at
them then with meaning, so that
is all there was to vision this day
so blue and taut, that spotless lay
under stone fingers, which the play
of steel muscle tore brittlely at
and beat, while a blind cat
amid the snow grew her-
self an extra, fur-
less tail, laid
in cannonéd
chimney
lea
THE GOD AND FRUSTRATE SHRINE

Tower and weep,
o steeple.
The flashing phalanx
waves
its ton of fist.
THE GAME'S THIRTEENTH STRIKE

Each nettle shreds a silence, needling in furrows of forehead seeming shine to setting pins in passioned gallery.
STORM

Ferocious moment,
written on the eye when
movements writhe to incandescence
the hour,
dynamiting sight to detour sleep.

Self-tracing, everything apart and wholly
scribbles this inaugurated mud
to its own exaltation.
The sight is upon me now,
though I lid myself,
lapping my mind within pillows.

The glowing room,
shameless at this retreat, pencils
prayers of fire on my skin.
TRYPTYCH

Sappho

"The moist flowers along Acheron
open as my eyes' close.

Let me lie and call death lovely."

Li Po

"The terrace of darkness is drenched
by the sun of sobering morning.
My friend the mountain laughs
as the Emperor bids my words follow him
along the garden walks."

Rimbaud

"Purer than absinthe and stronger than love is the disease of my hand,
wearing as it were the motions of manhood and touching to fire the
banalities."
NIGHT OF FISTING

Fragments of dimness cling in corners;
center is a bonfire of flesh and time
where rushing orients of limb
ride hide hammers, glistening
behind thrown turmoil;

heavy hacks pierce frenzied prayer,
removed in gloom and stench.

The stippled Gipsy bows and wipes his nose,
then strong, straight for gut goes,
as Minneapolis Bob cracks
like a brand burnt
through, circles with a poker for the blaze,
and dabs in dimmed excitement down.

The sultanic sentinel makes pixilated crucifix
above the worming ember; corner moth-dances
solicit rages of acclaim.

We lean to warm our hands—fan, stoke, draw
up fires to height of man—
when, from stretched throats,
the croak of chaos
rides in smoky quick wind
that winds the incandescence,
switched, bell-with, off.

The fallen eye of omniscience
shatters with slammed seats;
and we speak, as our hunger
for fearful time
fades to phosphorescence
within the enormous dark.
RODIN'S 'THE KISS'

Stasimonial inquiry and reply
despite stone, where have I seen thee
before, mandala amid the eye?
Guitars, the organ, or one violin
draw but in perpetual anticlimax
thy hewn pause past sound,
and the numbers of no poetry
embrace no thing with such staticies'
armed coherence. Where? I do not know.

Love-locked lips forever,
whose witnessed conversation
secret stays, will not tell me—
unwanted voyeur worshipper—undoing
silences that never can be spelled.

But I, most sure, have seen thee,
before this eye might keep,
or tongue lisp its trilling tribute,
and know thee in a way past memory's cant:

Something sudden here
exclaims that arch of neck,
and thigh-caressing palm below thy bend;
something, like my living blood—
flesh-blinded, swirling visionary;
formless rusher after rushing form—
statuizes seeing's sympathy.
CHORUS MYSTICUS

Beginning with a snort and ending with a sigh,
time cannot raze nor confusion alter
this monument we rear against the gods.
SPINNING THE DAY THROUGH MY HEAD

Nothing above.  Nothing to left.
Nothing below.  Nothing to right.
Here is my heart.  Here is my song.
Where shall I go?  Where is the light?

Nothing behind.  There is no door.
Nothing before.  There is no light.
Here is my brain.  Go with the song,
Where is the door?  Else all is night.
FRIEND

While it does not blaze,
always sparkles,
the procession of they wit.

While it does not thunder,
always grumbles,
the stomach of thy wrath.

While it does not wing,
always hurries,
the caravan of thy heart.

And like a mountain lake,
art thou a deep, cool,
magnificent swindler of the sun.
NAMELESS GRAVE BY A NAMELESS SEA, PROBABLY GREEK

Bright air by brighter honor signed,
and wounded things, all left behind,
mean nothing in a travesty of sleep.

The arrows of Thanatos miss no man: Weep.
SHADOWS

Bleak disappointments
rage
this coming-together-place:
menace of sighs
in jeopardy of time.
Vindication and mortality
meet on the plains of Troy;
and though the dead forget the dead
in the House of Hades, Patroklus,
even there shall he remember thee,
and this day.

But the ember does not burn backward
to timber;
it's visible music
shapes the air
to heat,
but the day is no longer.
SENTIMENTS WITH NUMBERS

I.

The veil you have rent
with every strained skill
of hungry fingers
hid either Medusa or emptiness,
else would you not
ever mirror it.

II.

The idle idols wait
the non-idyllic day.

III.

You are crux ansata arms
and standing man behind.
The arms and the man are empty things,
and you, beyond ruin,
the terrible power of position.

IV.

Beat your way to chaos, then!
I would rather destroy
a library of worlds in my mind
than build one
I believed in.
And even must the final word be walking,
as my blood footsteps now even
my brain toward blacking day.
More Recent
I WALKED BEYOND THE MIRROR

I walked beyond the mirror.
I met a mirror-man.
He held a backward walking stick
within his backward hand.
He offered me a reversed smile
and struck a left-right pose.
He spoke a backhand compliment.
I struck him on the nose.
“Oh, East is East and West is West
and ne’er the twain shall meet,”
said he as the full force of things
knocked him from his feet.
“True,” said I, offhandedly,
“and then again reversed.
I offered you the best of both.
It somehow turned out worst.”
“No matter, no matter,” cried he,
“you meant me no left hooks.
I love you like a brother.
Perhaps I like your looks.
We shall embrace and clasp our hands
at the sound of the reversed tone.”
We backed away, we turned away.
We found ourselves alone.
DREAMSCAPE

Graham crackers on the patio
and peace in the afternoon.
It was a two-piano Sunday
under the darkness trees.
Lady high on the mountaintop
let down your auburn hair . . .
Cathedral bells in the city,
coffee in crystal cups . . .
The greenness of lawn
beneath unfurling cloud . . .
The notes have reached the dancer
at the center of the earth . . .
The train bearing dead relatives
will come . . .
Pianos build an escalator of glass
tinkling in the middle air . . .
I have heard it said
that they will come . . .
Rainbows dance
on tread and riser,
the coffee steams in the cup.
High in the noon of June
a lopsided moon
drips venom
to the vectored eye.
The woods decay,
the rivers halt.
The world falls to the dancer,
Sunday apple,
earthdance cadenced, Mountain Lady,
blineyed watcher,
falls, silent, Lady,
in ellipse and default—
I heard the bells expel.
Down then like diamond dominos
the stairway shuffled, fell.
Lady, Lady, let down your hair . . .
The train is coming, an eye
behind every bullet hole,
from out the vanishing point,
on tracks of gleaming bones.
The scapulae of buffalo
lie in the right of way.
. . . in ropes of auburn mercy.
Sacrificed pianos
and shattered cups
upon the fading lawn . . .
The ghost wind sings
thundersong.
One strand down the
firmament, Lady,
to world awake away . . .
And crumbled Graham crackers
feed the black birds . . .
The train fills
up the sky, mechanic
throb and eyes
like coded bullets . . .
I cannot see
the mountaintop. The
shadow grows before
the engine. The world
belongs
to the dancer, the dance
belongs
to the dream.
Dead eyes and iron thrust.
PHILIP K. DICK

God or gods, there is a music.  
Once I thought it a stringéed thing,  
but now I know it's pipes.
Listen as it stills the cricket note
in the soul's dark night.
Love is only part:

Hate in our time
and partial mind
may bring the soul of man to God.
But then again, Cratylus,
who knows? Which Sistine roof
was Michael Angelo's proof?

Under Santa Ana's lights
Philip Dick has known dark nights

\begin{quote}
barrel of gun
note of pipe
\textit{Easter picnic eve}
\textit{despair koan}
\end{quote}

and scratched these lines
where neon glows:

Where sound the notes
in every order,
traffic pass—
worlds without end—
by.

Pipe now the last
insomniac shephard
beyond the dawn,
where bars of light
hold up delinquent day.

Traffic turn left
where fat horses
gambol.

The world's a world away.
TO SPIN IS MIRACLE CAT

a line of dust behind me
dust beneath my wheels
having lived at all
is miracle cat
and peace is war by other means
said a wise old man
the clarity of the blue curve
overhead the bowstring of day
veed taut the tinny notes
of this my radio the sad call
from the pages of a book
are all if truth be known
I can hold within my head
deer on the mountain
blackbird in the air
the world is circle
and movement I its center rider
and each is something else
by other means dust
beneath the wheels line
behind the car our
paws need licking when we
pause to sort the way
that cat is the quantity
the maximum quantum
leap of dust to blaze
of day starting with eye
sometimes catching language
often losing words to circle
and movement to utter leaves
like trees to spin
is miracle cat

68
TO SPIN IS MIRACLE CAT
by Roger Zelazny

First published in this form in October, 1981 and limited to 720 copies, of which 220 were specially bound and signed by the author; of these, 200 copies were numbered and 20 copies were marked “Presentation Copy”. The text was set in Paladium, a type design based on Hermann Zapf’s Palatino, on a Compu- graphic EditWriter by Jeff Levin of Pendragon Graphics, Beaverton, Oregon. Text paper is 60# Warrens “1854”, an acid-free paper with extended shelf life. This book was printed, Smyth sewn and casebound by Braun-Brumfield, Inc., Ann Arbor, Michigan, in connection with Paul de Fremery & Co., San Francisco, California.
ROGER ZELAZNY lives in New Mexico with his wife Judy, sons Devin and Trent, and daughter Shannon.

He has been writing professionally since 1962, and has written many novels, including *The Changing Land*, *Lord of Light*, *Dream Master*, and the five volume Amber series, as well as numerous short stories, including “A Rose For Ecclesiastes,” “For A Breath I Tarry,” “The Doors of His Face, The Lamps of His Mouth,” and “The Last Defender of Camelot.”

His work has been translated into twelve languages, and has been adapted for stage, screen and radio.

This is his third collection of poetry.

Forthcoming is a novel, *Coils*, a collaboration with Fred Saberhagen.

Mr. Zelazny is a past secretary-treasurer of the Science Fiction Writers of America.

He has won three Nebula and three Hugo Awards.

*Also available from Underwood-Miller:*

**When Pussywillows Last In The Catyard Bloomed** $5.00

Roger Zelazny’s second poetry collection, published by Norstrilia Press

*typography by Pendragon Graphics*

*Trade edition - ISBN 0-934438-50-1-------- $9.95*

*Signed edition - ISBN 0-934438-49-8-------- $30.00*

*published and distributed by*

Underwood-Miller
239 North 4th Street
Columbia, PA 17512