

## A few poems by Frederick Seidel

### SUNLIGHT

There is always hope except when there isn't—it is everywhere.  
The pigeons above Broadway fly left to right in their underwear.  
They skydive down to the sidewalk to sup.  
They land like paratroopers, standing up,  
Hauling in their parachutes of light.  
I look down on the trees from my superior height.

I look down at the snapshot of a friend and I think,  
This man will be dead pretty soon, and I think,  
How weird that I'm thinking that.  
My mood has made the photograph's brain waves flat.  
I don't really mean that the way it sounds.  
I don't really think he ought to die because he's put on a few pounds.

If you consent to life, as I do, condescendingly,  
It seems you get to fuck unendingly.  
The woman in my bed plays Mozart heartrendingly.  
I drank too much last night—as usual—mind-bendingly.  
The body on the bed is all eyes as I prepare to mount it.  
There's the body's usual hopefulness. The thing is to surmount it.

I'm standing at the window, after, looking out and looking back,  
Looking past my floaters, my swimming specks of black.  
I'm shitting on the ledge outside, moaning in my awful way.  
I rap on the window to make myself fly away.  
The body on the bed gets up, smiling at the gorgeous day.  
The winter sunlight sparkles diamonds down on Broadway.

SONG: "THE SWOLLEN RIVER OVERTHROWS ITS BANKS"

The terrorists are out of breath with success.  
And cancer is eating American women's breasts.  
The terrorists are bombing Madrid  
And everywhere serious and nice.  
They put the backpacks on  
Without a word and leave  
The Italian premier talking to an empty room because  
They leave the TV on and leave.  
One of the many networks Mr. Berlusconi owns  
Carries him live denouncing terror. The man  
By now has reached Milan  
Who has the man in London for Miami.  
Both will board the train,  
As in the swollen river overthrows its banks.

SPIN

A dog named Spinach died today.  
In her arms he died away.  
Injected with what killed him.  
Love is a cup that spilled him.  
Spilled all the Spin that filled him.  
Sunlight sealed and sent.  
Received and spent.  
Smiled and went.

## STROKE

The instrument is priceless.  
You can't believe it happened.  
The restoration flawless.  
The voice is almost human.  
The sound is almost painful.  
The voice is almost human.  
I close my eyes to hear it.  
The restoration flawless.  
The beauty is inhuman.  
The terrifying journey.  
O strange new final music.  
The strange new place I've gone to.  
The blinding light is music.  
The starless warm night blinding.  
The odor of a musk rose  
Presents itself as secrets.  
Paralysis can't stop them.  
The afterburners kick in.  
The visitors can't stop them.  
I dreamed that I was sleeping.  
Physiatry can't say it.  
I can't believe it happened.  
A handshake is the human  
Condition of bereavement.  
A thixotropic sol is  
A shaken-up false body.  
I know another meaning.  
A life was last seen living.  
A life was last seen leaving.  
The summit of Mount Sinai,  
the top of their new tower,  
The stark New North Pavilion,  
Looks out on New York City,  
The miles of aspiration,  
The lonely devastation.  
I listen to the music  
Nine years before 2000.

## GRANDSON BORN DEAD

The baby born dead  
Better lie down.  
Better stand up.  
Better get up and go out  
For a walk.  
He stands around in the rain  
In the room.  
*Breathe* two three four.  
And down in the rain in the drain  
In the floor.  
Babies born dead  
Drown in the main in the more.  
Better a walk.  
The head on a stalk  
Laughs and waves.  
It is the sun with its rays.  
The sun wants to talk.  
If you start to be sick,  
If you start to be stuck,  
If you have to sit down,  
If one foot starts to drop,  
If hope starts to drop,  
You will drown  
In the drain in the main in the more.  
The rain is downtown.  
Up here is happy.  
Get up!  
Get up, get out of bed!  
Wake up!  
Wake up, you sleepyhead!  
All right. Go ahead.  
Be dead.