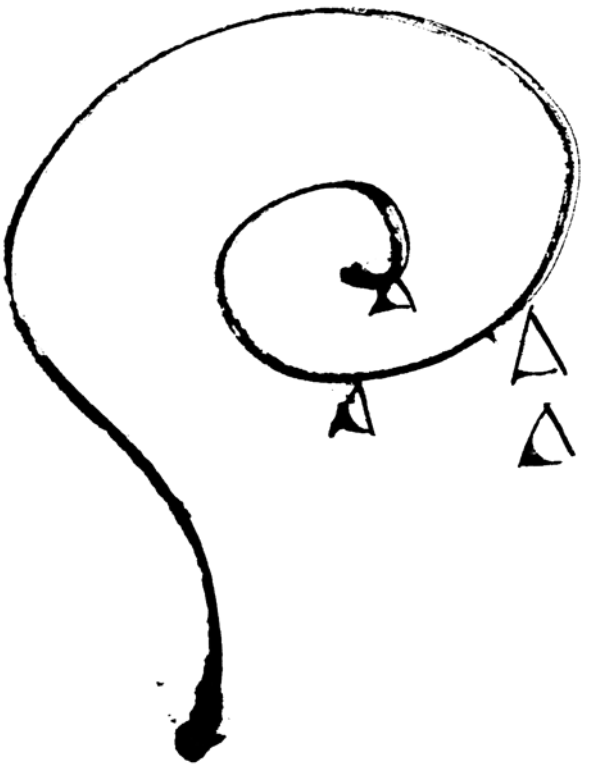
Three Poems

Norma Kassirer



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Norma Kassirer

The Poetry Collection is proud to celebrate National Poetry Month with this publication of Norma Kassirer's *Three Poems*, the fifth in a series featuring the work of poets living in Buffalo.

2009 Bernhard Frank
2010 Ansie Baird
2011 Jorge Guitart
2012 Ross Runfola

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Covers and inside cover images: Norma Kassirer, from "The 1985 Notebook."

The Round Table

The round table of fine mahogany
gave birth, in a glory of mathematical
impulse,
to its own imagined chairs,
the table having sat quiet for long years
in a room
next to the passageway
inhabited by a young god
forever at dance
in a field of evening primrose.

He entered the room
on a pirouette,
sat down in one of the chairs
and said, "What's for dinner?"
More magic? worried one chair
to another.
No one knew what to do—
how to geometrize a kitchen,
a stove, a cook.

The annoying persistence of origami once it is introduced to polite society

A rage, a dark snow of commas fell over the page,
so tightly spaced the page was black,
a sort of complacent, glowing hell,
except in areas where a rogue comma
has stationed itself and left a space for hope.
The story, therefore,
was gradually enabled to move in tiny arenas
to a martial music,
which increased as it summoned
adherents to its cause.
Unfortunately, a period of periods began…
(Human cells, the writer mused,
in the time provided,
are folded like origami.)
What does this mean, if anything?
Well, it must mean something—
algebraic, perhaps, or telegraphic or geometric—
precision, precision,
and the limits of my vision
are performing a slow dance
on my left wrist.

Bring your own rattrap cheese

The eventuating sunset would not be enough—
we'd seen better, more pink, more extravagant—
the way the color entered the water
to reveal the secret pavement
of the lake bottom.

The gull perched,
pink on a pink rock
all through the process,
whether from rapture
or simple birdliness
no one was sure.
Drink the beer. Pass the cheese.
Now toast the lesser sunset.

About Norma Kassirer

Norma Kassirer, writer and artist, is best known for her two novels for children, *Magic Elizabeth* (The Viking Press, 1966) and *The Doll Snatchers* (The Viking Press, 1969). *Magic Elizabeth* has been called a modern classic, and has been reprinted many times, currently appearing in newspapers throughout the world through Breakfast Serials serialized stories.

Subsequent publications include *The Hidden Wife*, a collection of stories with artwork by Willyum Rowe (Shuffaloff Press, 1991), the story cycle *Milly* (Buffalo Ochre Papers, 2008), and her novella *Katzenjammered* (BlazeVOX Books, 2010). Her short fiction and poetry have been published in various magazines, including *Angle of Repose*, *Between C & D*, *Blatant Artifice*, *MSS*, *Sow's Ear*, *TEXTS*, *Yellow Field*, and elsewhere. Her poems, which tend toward the narrative, often cross expectations of genre and engage with the lyric.

Also a painter, Norma exhibited her paintings at Betty's Restaurant on Virginia Street and at the Western New York Book Arts Collaborative for the book release of *Katzenjammered*. She also made stunning and thoroughly original handmade artist's books, one of which is owned by the Albright-Knox Art Gallery. Norma often painted at the MollyOlga studio, and participated in teaching classes there and through the Poets in the Schools program. She and her husband Earle were long involved with Hallwalls from its inception, with Norma at one time having painted murals on the ceiling of the old space on Essex.

Between the selection of these poems for inclusion in the Poetry Collection's Three Poems series and their publication, the author passed away at 89. May these poems mark her passing, and her longstanding contributions to the cultural life of the Buffalo community.

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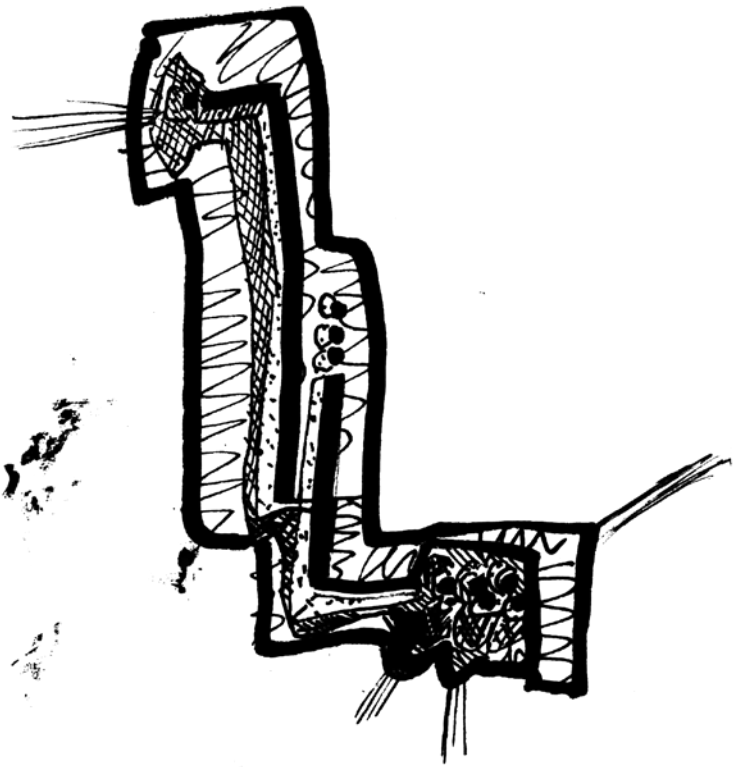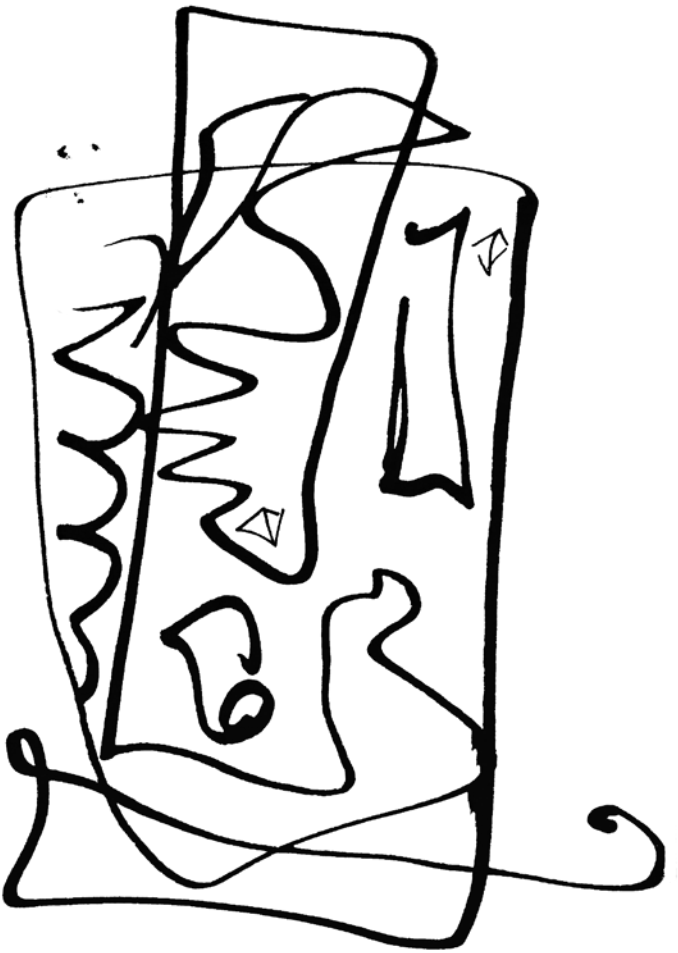
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