

Joseph Langland

RECOGNITIONS & RECOLLECTIONS

...and we walked out that morning
on a rocky road through the woodland
to an old family homestead
from Lervik, island of Stord
on the North Sea.

then we came to an inland lake
that was scarcely more than a pond
with grass like hair at the edges
with watercress, rushes, and reeds.
As we came, those quiet waters,
sprung from ancestral springs,
flashed in the sunlight,
yes, come, come.

From a cabin, a small white swan
from the Langeland home farm
on the other side of the pond,
having heard, perhaps, us coming,
came gliding over the surface,
arriving at our side.

White in the mirrored silence,
her image waved in the waters
and, somehow, seemed to be saying,
way over the rolling oceans
and far in the western Rockies,
yes, come, come,
and in tongues of the native cousins,
yah, kom, kom!

Some white and velvet neck,
arched in the mossy stones
slid with their darting beaks

into the bread in our palms.
Oh, we rode like a toy in a dream
of a Viking ship in the fjord.
Far in Wyoming, then, as darkness lay
on Laramie and the plains
in some immigrant hemisphere,
I thought your voice was saying,
 Yah, kom, kom
by some misty windowpane.

Somehow, you must have heard
a wandering voice like a rumor from
a lonely echoing Nordic town;
 Lervik, Island of Stord
 out of the North Sea.

What! Were those syllables in my blood
whispering again? You were not there,
although some glint of the self-same sun
would glow in your brushed dark hair.
 Whisper again, *yah, kom, kom!*

Then on the morning came,
Shadow by reed and stone,
and that small swan laid down its breast
in a nest of grass by the shoreline waters.
And then, like some ghost of silence
rising up from the shouting cousins,
she arched her wings to regions
beyond the stones.
 Yah, kom, kom.

There in the white-capped ranges of Wyoming
and oceanic air and shoreline shining
two eyes arouse the faces in our hair
to visionary echoes:
 Yah, kom, kom.