

Oh, There Are Lovers Still

Centuries old the willows on that island,
a half-moon lying within the river bend,
carved by the glacier or an ancient flood.

Winters revealed gray knotted trunks and branches
woven with withes, interlaced with vines,
but in another season the warm rains
fostered a jungle, a mysterious wood.

"Remember, never land there," we were warned
lest we encounter danger, who knew what
poisonous fangs, what quicksand or quagmire?

And so by day, youth-curious, we rowed
close to the weedy bank, where we could see,
peering into the leafy emerald twilight,
the long-toothed brakes crouched on the island floor,
wild orchises, sometimes a cardinal flower
burning as if to tempt us further in.

On summer nights, safe-anchored in a cove,
we watched the silver serpent of the current
and talked of life, our future, the unknown
in quiet voices, the only other sound
the ripples gently lapping at our prow.

Now all the trees are down, the island bare
a bridge built over, a grove of chimney stacks
where once we yearned but did not dare to trespass.
Black barges nudge the roughhewn timber pier,
oil tanks rise in rows along the shore.
The moonlight shines on oil-slick darkened waters.
Oh, there are lovers still, in the long shadow
of the mammoth aluminum-painted cylinders.

— Mildred Cousens

Rochester, New York

We are privileged to publish the following opening
section of H. E. Briggs' "Though Man Fly Angel High"
— soon to be released from Hors Commerce Press of
22526 Shadycroft Ave., Torrance, Calif. 90505 — an
ambitious but successful, meaty poem of 360 lines —
man versus space or inner versus outer space.