

## SURREALISTIC FABLIAU

Writhing on a mattress  
with a fitted, striped sheet  
neither of us doing very well  
we heard the doorbell.  
Rinaldo stood there  
wearing only a gray T-shirt  
and looking so goddam grave  
that I wasn't surprised  
when you asked him in.  
We spent three days  
holed up in our flat  
and he was just what you needed --  
Rope-Cock Rinaldo.  
I don't have much to complain  
about either, thinking back  
on that long, claustrophobic week-  
end, except for all  
that pickeled mackerel  
he made us force down  
with mayonnaise  
the white flesh so hard to separate  
from the soft backbone & black skin  
that we were never really sure  
what we were eating.

## BLUE CAT

She sat most of the day  
in the parlor  
with her father's porcelain cat  
in her lap  
uneasy on its haunches  
but never moving  
its spine arched high.  
Each  
was as delicate as the other  
but they didn't look alike  
as you might expect.  
A certain pinched quality  
maybe  
& eyes  
that stared with the same intensity.  
The cat stared at a magpie  
in a Goya reproduction  
on the wall  
but the girl's stare  
just missed this picture  
& hit the wallpaper --  
a fantasy  
of interlocking blue feathers.

Her father never objected  
to what might be considered  
regressive behavior  
but every so often  
after a drink or two  
with a good friend  
he would admit  
he was sorry  
she never got married  
& that  
he didn't see more of the cat.

-- Albert Stainton

Machias ME

DAY HELP -- THE BINDERY

i

It's the monotony, of course;  
the machine makes a perfect bow  
and you only have to feed it  
packages of brown paper.  
You try to make a perfect package.

ii

The people here smoke a lot.  
They kid each other, and gossip  
even though the machinery  
drowns all sound.

iii

The system is different.  
There's a 15.93 on the card  
they've given me.  
That must mean four o'clock.

iv

I understand my sister-in-law better,  
I think. She's parlayed seven years  
of this into a new house and car.  
She must have wanted those things terribly.