For the Unknown Sailor

E. Michael Wilkins
TERRESTRIAL HEADACHE
(From an American Indian sacred story)

"Old Woman at the egress of this world,
I stand within your lodge, and I would eat."
"Grandson, here is rice." Her whisper purled
Across the kettle, and the rice was sweet.

"Old Woman, I have eaten and am filled
Beyond the hunger of this life," I said,
"And now that all the clamorous want is stilled,
I bear a pain within my body's head."

"But I will cup it, child." Her ancient hands
Broke the skull as gently as the rains
Break the surface of the arid lands,
And her pale fingers took the troubled brains.

"Now you may go," said she, "nor longer care
If crystal guards the House of Dawn, or not,
For you are clean of earth, and spirit-bare."
I journeyed on, with all the world forgot.

GEMMA D'AURIA

FOR THE UNKNOWN SAILOR

Weave a wreath of seaweed,
    And knot the fronds with shells.
Leave the airbulbs swinging
    Like tolling searock bells.

Throw it out at midnight
    To join the undertow.
Tides will know the tombless
    As neither friend nor foe.

E. MICHAEL WILKINS