

1952

Birds in His Head

Martin Seymour-Smith

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/nmq>

Recommended Citation

Seymour-Smith, Martin. "Birds in His Head." *New Mexico Quarterly* 22, 4 (1952). <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/nmq/vol22/iss4/11>

This Contents is brought to you for free and open access by the University of New Mexico Press at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in New Mexico Quarterly by an authorized editor of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact disc@unm.edu.

ELEGY

It was a stranger child, she knows, than I
 Who loved her first. Not I, but I, he stepped
 From a dream where while she slept
 He, kissing lips he thought death-white, lay by:
 And thinking her a fantasy, took rest
 In caressing her cold arms. Waking,
 He fled from this dream, her breath breaking
 That safe love he nursed in his breast.

I saw her wheeling by a dusk-lit lake
 A child not hers, in ordinary afternoon:
 She was an elegy for some departure, soon
 To tear anatomies of love, and make
 Each loathed child her own. The sunlight
 Hovered for an instant on the haunted water:
 To leave that child her dark familiar daughter
 Who cries out mischief and all ruin in the night.

So moving away from all past sorrow,
 Care, or joy, I follow her from today to today
 In no dream, forgetting my fear of her way
 Which leads to real and undreamed death tomorrow.

BIRDS IN HIS HEAD

Her violent birds in his head he wished,
 And to find that secret at full moon went
 To a swamp's centre, where sweating
 He stood in his boat and howled
 'Take me at last, for your mystery's sake!'

And her answer thus: hundreds drowned
 that moment in a distant sea
 (Innocent they leapt from the shelving decks
 Similar in love's uncertainty alone)
 Now his pain only their wingbeats
 In his head: and guilt at all such deaths.

MARTIN SEYMOUR-SMITH