

APPENDICES

James Laughlin's Poems

THE VISITOR

When I closed my eyes I could see the head of a girl in half-light. But was it you? She had your aristocratic arch of the neck and your pretty curls, but where were your laugh and your sparkle? And your glance toward me wasn't particularly affectionate.	5
I ran through the catalog of past loves but this girl was not there. She must have been you. But the frown? How had I displeased you? Please tell me, but then visions can't talk.	10
The telephone rang: I opened my eyes to go answer it. Drat! It was the broker who wants me to buy Bell Atlantic stock. I went back to the sofa to close my eyes again. But you were gone, perhaps never to reappear.	15 20

FATA MORGANA

Like the weather, her visits were uncertain. Often I would wait for weeks, fearing I had lost her.	
Then, toward midnight, there would be a scratching at my door. She never knocked, she would scratch like a cat with her long nails, and I awakened myself for pleasure, for the generosity with which she dispensed her charms.	5 10
She spoke a little English but she would never tell me about herself, whence she came or what her history had been. To this day I know only the mysterious radiance of her being, how when I held her in my arms she could unleash an unbridled passion.	15
She would never stay with me for long. Then, with a kiss she would be off. Where was she going when she left me? Was there another lover, or lovers, waiting for her visit? Nor did she ever tell me her name. So, to myself, I call her Fata Morgana, the best loved of King Arthur's damsels.	20 25 30

THE SEARCH

She writes that she cannot
Find me in her dreams. She
Has been searching for me
Night after night but with
No success. “Why are you
Hiding from me?” she asks,
“Did I do something to
Offend you, to hurt you?
I think you must have
Misunderstood what was
Meant as a sign of love.”

“Look further, look deeper,”
I write her. “The world of
Dreams is vast. It has many
Passageways that lead to
Corners no one has ever
Visited. Don’t abandon the
Search too easily. Don’t
Give up. I have encountered
You in my dreams, beautiful
As you always were, your
Voice the same, unchanged.

“Yet what difference does
It make where we meet, in
Your dreams or in mine?
Does it matter if we are
Insubstantial? We still
Can speak the words we
Know, the words of love.”

THE INVISIBLE PERSON

Life kept rolling her over
like a piece of driftwood

in the surf of an angry sea
she was intelligent and beau-

tiful and well-off she made 5
friends easily yet she wasn't

able to put the pieces to-
gether into any recognizable

shape she wasn't sure who 10
she wanted to be so she

ended up being no one in par-
ticular she made herself al-

most invisible she was the
person you loved so much who

really wasn't there at all. 15

Biography of James Laughlin

James Laughlin (1914-1997) was born in Pittsburgh, Pa., U.S. on October 30, 1914. Beside being a poet, he worked as a U.S. publisher. He was born to a wealthy family. Laughlin founded New Directions press in 1936 after graduating from Harvard University. He established the company initially to publish the works of ignored yet influential writers, including William Carlos Williams and Ezra Pound, a friend and major influence on his life and work. Laughlin studied for several months in Rapallo, Italy at the “Ezuversity” for learning and reading. He studied together with Ezra Pound. Over the years, James Laughlin issued about twenty books, including poetry, short stories, and essay collections. Laughlin revealed himself in his poems as a master of concision, of the well-placed word that penetrates the human heart.

His first book of poems is Some Natural Things. He also writes The River (1938), Selected Poems (1959, published in England as Confidential Report, and Other Poems), James Laughlin: Selected Poems, 1935-1985 (1986), William Carlos Williams and James Laughlin: Selected Letters (1989), Collected Poems of James Laughlin (1992), Ezra Pound and James Laughlin Selected Letters (1994), Henry Miller and James Laughlin: Selected Letters (1996), The Love Poems of James Laughlin (1997). His most recent collections include The Secret Room (1996) and The Love Poems Laughlin (1997). James Laughlin died in Norfolk, Conn. on November 12, 1997.

Sources:

“James Laughlin (1914-1997)”

“James Laughlin Biography”

“James Laughlin: Poems New and Selected Book Description”