

*F. J. Bergmann*

# Retrograde

An apparent change of heart,  
an inexplicable regression along the primrose past.  
Invisible, I radiate distress signals from the city of madness;  
accidental milieu in the middle Occident.  
The journey backward was without incident.

I am back in the shadow of the white elephant  
inside which I spent my childhood,  
building fires in its guts, hoping it would fart smoke signals:  
sending messages back to that other galaxy  
that I was ready to come home now.  
The scent of ancient decay rises from a bedroom carpet;  
a selection of antipathies is offered from a dessert cart.  
I am easily deceived, I reflect, disoriented, tuned to receive  
wavelengths pinging from the edge of the continent.

Behind cloudy glass, a person of obscured gender  
watches me from an Arizona-colored wall,  
peeking through winged fingers.  
The mike works no matter where you point your voice;  
there are no revving engines, no shouting intruders.  
Everyone is as white as milk; this is the Dairy State.  
I trade in my lamp for a newer model;  
we enter the palace of knowledge,  
where the chairs are arranged in neat rows  
and everyone is soft-spoken, and I yell as loud as I can.  
Everyone claps politely.

A faint flavor of preserve haunts an empty mouth  
long after the absence of that condiment:  
a poet with ostrich-feather eyebrows  
unfurling the scroll of his brain into the warm night,  
mockingbird trill across the vibrating pavement;  
a poet whose chocolate voice is embedded  
with rich nuts and luscious fruits  
from the cornucopia of memory;  
a burning man, half-listening,  
speaking in complete sentences,  
making his demons jump through hoops of fire.

Somewhere a planet continues  
its mysterious movements in darkness,  
under the influence of an irresistible force.

F. J. Bergmann frequents Wisconsin and *fbitz.com*, writing science fiction, poetry, and what falls between those worlds, and functioning, so to speak, as the editor of *Star\*Line*, the journal of the Science Fiction Poetry Association, and the poetry editor of *Mobius: The Journal of Social Change*.