SHE SANG

The air owed it to you. For those

many times it dove avidly

into your expanding chest. It knew

there it would be organized, expelled

with the clarion impress of tone

and overtone. You did so much

for air that it had longed for -

to dance, with us, in Lillas Pastia's

tavern by the ramparts of Seville.

To stroke Tatiana's hair as she

writes to Onegin, even on that

dread hill to join you and the flute

draping Jesus down from our cross.

Then, the air was pleased to be your

errand boy, to pass and be passed

through by your pellucid song.

You pushed it on tactfully, you gave

it pause. Ungrateful aether, then,

for in the end, when air became

hard to come by, the uncoordinated

road gang strain of your mouth, tensed

neck and chest had to pry it out

in jagged blocks from a quarry

that we could not see. To be consumed

in one obliterating heave, with

aftershocks of gasping. No coda,

only that raspy dissonant summons

of a fickle accompanist.