

From the Skylon Tower, Niagara Falls

Your view: a sunny atmosphere pure as a postcard's,
the upper rapids, Goat Island, the white cloud

of an ascending foam, a rainbow radiant
as a saint's halo, whirlpools and the gorge:

a marvel of intemperate power that shoots
to....Annie Taylor, virgin school-marm, who first shot

(first lady in a barrel) the Falls at forty-three,
for a cash prize - it barely paid her poorhouse bills.

What the delirium taught her, no one knows....
Still the rainbow glows, the thunder ever unappeased.

Once Iroquois maidens, chosen for their pious throes,
dowered with fruit and game, calm in their birchen canoes,
joined the maddened and fomenting Chief whom they aroused.
Now, you'll watch the frail *Maid of the Mist* propel

tourists beneath his squalls. Who's not enthralled
to find themselves dwarfed before such ancient rites?

Later, after champagne, the Annie you've espoused
will surely wish a dandling to the sweet epithalamium

of the Niagara, whose rhythms you'll fix upon,
my dear honeymooner, til she whispers, wails *Come Come....*

the river swelling through your flouncing limbs
its cool spray lighting on your skin - on Annie's too, of course.

— Robert Wiljer