

University of Montana

## ScholarWorks at University of Montana

---

Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, &  
Professional Papers

Graduate School

---

1967

### Somber dolphins

Frederick M. DeMarinis

*The University of Montana*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd>

**Let us know how access to this document benefits you.**

---

#### Recommended Citation

DeMarinis, Frederick M., "Somber dolphins" (1967). *Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, & Professional Papers*. 3606.

<https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd/3606>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, & Professional Papers by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@mso.umt.edu](mailto:scholarworks@mso.umt.edu).

SOMBER DOLPHINS

By

Frederick M. DeMarinis

B.A. University of Montana, 1961

Presented in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

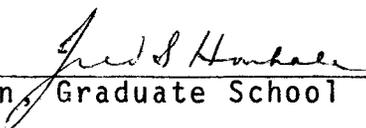
Master of Arts

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

1967

Approved by:

  
Chairman, Board of Examiners

  
Dean, Graduate School

MAY 31 1967

Date

UMI Number: EP34040

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent on the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



UMI EP34040

Copyright 2012 by ProQuest LLC.

All rights reserved. This edition of the work is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.



ProQuest LLC.  
789 East Eisenhower Parkway  
P.O. Box 1346  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 - 1346

## Acknowledgements

Voices International for "Kodak Blue"

Nexus for "Mirage 1"

Epoch for "Dore's Vase"

Little Review for "Monday Beach" and "The Day  
After Words"

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title	Page
OLD MAN WALKING.....	1
SVENGALI FADING.....	2
ONCE LONELY SON.....	4
DORE'S VASE.....	6
JUNGLE QUEEN.....	8
BULLETIN.....	10
MIRAGE 1.....	11
MIRAGE 2.....	13
THE TACTICIANS.....	15
MENDOCINO.....	16
FORT ROSS NORTH TO HILLS ONCE RUSSIAN.....	18
PACIFIC SHORE.....	20
NIGHT BEACH.....	22
MONDAY BEACH.....	23
OLD STORY.....	24
BIG RAIN.....	26
TAMALPAIS.....	27
NARCISSUS IN HIPBOOTS.....	29
BEACH MAN.....	30

Title	Page
CLIFFS NEAR OCEANSIDE.....	31
THE LOGIC OF GUITARS.....	32
HARDBOILED EASTER.....	34
BALLAD FOR A CRAFTY BUDDHIST.....	35
KODAK BLUE.....	37
THE DAY AFTER WORDS.....	38
BAD SPELL ON WEST BECKWITH.....	39
SEA WALL.....	40

## Old Man Walking

When his dying heel bit gravel on the shoulder  
he counted swamp birds to himself. Not stupid  
in his season or out, just bent, he likely knew  
the proper names to birds we called gray lunks  
deranged by swamp and oil slicks. Eighty years  
of modern history stormed his brain with scenes  
no one else would tour. Though he likely had  
a lover chances are she died before this road  
was paved. Diesels bulled him inches west.

We knew his leather, saw it gnarled in Butte  
where copper binds skin to flesh a way that calls  
to mind this sea-brazed weather. Here none ask  
what tide beached you first, spun your inner ear  
with swelling dreams, cracked your eye with salt.

Cars spin down freeways to streamlined junk,  
too fast to be curious for what seems tied down.  
We ask our maps for answers, and you, as usual,  
disappear in rear-view scenes, curving into space.  
Our explosive cars go their roads away, led  
by asphalt turns. We are young and free, they say,  
those strange birds are tied to swamps.

## Svengali Fading

We cried, or wanted to, in spite  
of make-up made for 1930,  
when Trilby, so blond and white, fell.  
We smelled, or thought we did, the incense  
that must have stung your eyes, fading  
in one last try to pierce  
the loud cabaret, blind smoke of hookahs,  
the sallow lears of near-east deadbeats,  
sailors of the world --freighter steam  
cold in their palms-- shouting,  
On with the bloody show! la blonde!  
and you, sagging to the stage,  
no strength in your baton.

Memory, how its glaze sweeps your eye  
at the far end of sight, and how it dims  
public noise in the roar of slow blood  
seeping from your brain --this is how it ends,  
those last scenes, cut to tip the heart  
with telegraphed cues, drugged Turks,  
smoked wisdom coiling from their smiles,

the close-up camera posing the impossible  
question you answer without a twitch.

Your despised magic is dead  
and everyone knows it.

The dive clears out  
as alarmed sirens warble  
certain trouble, and placid Turks,  
practical in a pinch, leave  
Trilby's chiseled loser  
heroic in English tweeds  
holding the bag as usual  
but spoiling for a clean fight  
above your tired face.

## Once Lonely Son

His room above the war  
surplus store, his Luger,  
captured in a famous battle,  
waited for his knock. In yellow  
light from the dark wall  
he identified the peeling door  
he admitted finally as his own  
and it opened on the empty room  
of his only bad dream.

But when he put the big blue barrel  
to his mouth and heard  
the dry trigger click  
that sent his brains  
spreading through the universe  
he hated, and later, coming to  
on the same barroom floor where  
several familiar faces hovered  
over his, and he heard himself sing  
in the voice he admitted finally  
as his own, "Kiss me sweet, kiss me now,

for once I was a lonely son,"  
the barkeep merely said, "I'll stand  
the old bum one more shot,  
then out."

## Dore's Vase

That neo-classical rape scene  
killed us in the gallery, and now  
this romantic vase in the vestibule.  
Look, satyrs with Clydesdale hoofs.  
Those profiles, so jovial,  
like silent film Romans  
playing up one last orgy  
before the quake. Bacchantes  
on slopes writhe against the slide  
downhill. At bottom, huge bugs  
fight a losing war with cherubs.  
Silenus is too fat to fall.  
Everyone's stoned except the cherubs  
who are too young, and the bugs  
who'd rather eat leaves.  
Gravity is the final aphrodisiac.  
Cherubs have wings, bugs are weightless  
even in bronze, but the bacchantes  
are clinging to vines  
hoping for a sober hero.  
Through all the uproar

each fig leaf stays put  
like a matinee cowboy's hat.  
With things so screened  
no lover can single out his goal.  
No stopped act strains against  
the frozen bronze. Look,  
the mice are moving up.  
But wait, this is nothing,  
in the next room  
two wild-eyed rococo unicorns  
are spoiling for the goldsmith  
who wouldn't cast their balls.

## Jungle Queen

From the flesh-eating fish of the river  
he saved the blond queen of the jungle  
(lost daughter of a famous explorer)  
and on luxurious moss in the moonlight  
did not make the pass she expected.  
Tuned to the highly uplifting  
he quoted his favorite author  
until she fell asleep uneasy  
holding his transistor short-wave.

From the dark of the wild Orinoco  
they emerged into lights of the city  
where sambas from underground nightclubs  
tickled the soles of her feet  
and rhythms she knew from the jungle  
licked at the flame in her hips.

When at last in the museum of Rio  
he showed her a bust of her father  
(the great bird-watcher from Vienna)  
she quoted her favorite author

whose hard unsyllabic slogan  
aroused the guards of the city  
who found her alone in the plaza  
washing her mouth in the fountain.

## Bulletin

The mayor of Buenos Aires has been arrested.

Athens is under siege once more.

Orbital bombers are being tested.

Palomar's watching the sun's tight core.

Athens is under siege once more.

Our local beach has been Geiger-counted.

Palomar's scratching the sun's tight core.

Peace in Athens has been discounted.

Orbital bombers are being tested.

Our sunburned brains are tight with news.

Widows in Boston are being molested.

Sun can be cancerous say medical reviews.

Palomar's watching the sun's tight core.

Our local beach will soon be tested.

A convention of heroes has called for war.

Sunbathers in Boston will be arrested.

Sunbathers in Boston will be arrested.

On Palomar they're reading medical reviews.

Arterial highways are cracked and congested.

Athens no longer is in the news.

Mirage 1

we hear trawlers

in the fog

the absent screech of gulls

muffled in the fog

and the bomber's drone

and sly submarines

passing for whales

among whales

too bored to care

in the fog

out of fog

coast guard cutters come

searching for contraband

cutting up the bay

throwing lights on outlaw lovers

who sabotage the beach

where dark men

with Spanish innocence

net the surf

for parcels



## Mirage 2

Shoreline whitecaps applaud  
our winded stagger.

Fire in the air  
is doused by fog and we say  
let's go back to the hotel,  
duck this salt fog spray  
or spill vermouth  
until that sea  
gags in grief.

Wind like this so arctic  
should give some details  
of certain snow.

Blizzards channel down  
our knowing bones and we  
like mallards bluffed  
to break formation  
lean our shaky parts  
on misread cues

and  
flop.

In Montana, mallards  
would delta south

from northern skies  
and we would say, Of course.  
Here, our roles are upstaged  
by smart gulls, beach crows  
and the Packard roadsters  
of forgotten stars  
restored to perfect chrome.

The Tacticians  
(after Eugenio Montale)

Against the hot sun-baked wall  
old men score the kills  
of blackbirds, or watch grass snakes  
slide through cropped lawns toward water.

They watch long columns of army ants  
infiltrating the weeds, and call them  
"unconscious tacticians." Or they peek  
through the fig tree's leaves to see

the moving wrinkles of the ocean  
demolish themselves against the cliffs.  
And as you walk, Bikini girl,  
held lovely by the bronze sun,

they are reminded that life is war.  
Unaware of us, you merely follow  
the slow serpentine climb  
of the high white wall

topped with the razor brown  
of a million smashed beer bottles.

## Mendocino

The town tacks down the hill.  
Wood frame homes lean and rot  
paintless into the green wind.  
Today the sky and sea are twins.  
A trawler floats by corking buoys  
that hum history to themselves.  
The fleet is out, the town  
could be land-locked in Dakota  
cocked for tricks sky might work  
on ripe wheat. By ordinance  
the chalk beach was made  
the public dumping ground.

These days artists call it Maine  
and sell clay at San Francisco rates.  
A contradiction of currents  
that sends surf in sharp deltas  
to the crescent shore, is snared  
in certain oils. As ever, the milk  
horizon cancels the eye.

The town, no eye for quaint decay,  
waits. Oil and clay have lost

all defeat. Alone,  
the Foursquare Lighthouse church  
confirms: men decay. The sea  
is never older than a day.

As ever, the wind retains  
its green. Houses lose  
their paint. Uncertain Russians  
break for Sitka or glacial steppes  
where the fatal trick Slavic dreams  
from a spiked samovar.

Fort Ross North To Hills Once Russian

Walk the spit a mile until the town has charm,  
--west, where the sea pounds abstractions  
out of paint, and otters for the czar crowd  
the dead hotel with endless talk of home.  
Relax your stare and sea becomes sky. Ghost  
trawlers track the milk expanse. Easy  
to believe a sudden balalaika, the hills turned  
arctic and dangerous with Siberian wolves.

Vodka, when good, drums the south wind  
out of mind. When rare, robs the ancient wisdom  
a squaw's contempt puts on. Wisdom  
in a stoned man's face could gag a sage.  
Your name screamed in sea-turned caves  
comes back strange, no alphabet here  
like yours. Hands, cruel without identity,  
spread rough on shaking thighs. Your terms  
are hard. Home is what you lost this hand  
before you learned the rules. Now you know,

get out means please die somewhere else.

The sea breaks mean, too. Otters can't mate  
when survival means keep on the move, don't  
get caught. Listen, these caves were not planned  
for love, and we agreed, those hills are cut  
by wind that drives syllables down your throat.

## Pacific Shore

Volcanic stones ram the phased roll  
of tidal drifts. From shale cliffs  
we watched each white burst fill  
stale tide pools where hermit crabs  
scrape for the safety of shells.

Past the jammed collapse of wave  
on wave, pelicans comb the swells  
for catch. Gulls stand sentinel  
on high peaks, and one plover  
tests stones for shaken clams.

Look, that closing fog could fool  
a rigged ship, cloud it for a day  
then set it free near those shelves  
of grounded rock splintering sea.  
We give ourselves Spanish names,

mourn the loss of sea-caught brothers,  
then cast these borrowed ghosts  
to the tide. Battered logs  
pound themselves to splinter  
like grieving fists. Love,

we must climb those cliffs,  
the tide is reaching every peak.  
We must drop our Spanish names, find  
high ground where memories we know  
are real will try to make us mourn.

We must climb those cliffs,  
this battlefield of stones,  
raise once more our worn-out names  
from littered drifts of wounded words  
and the groans of a wrecked guitar.

## Night Beach

Waves collapse at dusk. No sound  
of tide. Jellyfish sink like flags.  
Kelp flies lose interest. Gray,  
deadbeat gulls scrounge east.

Fold the blanket now.

That dark wind is hard with salt mist  
and this beach is older than belief.

Fold the blanket now.

If we stay we might see  
water blacken to sky  
or a freighter's lamp  
ghosting that void.

## Monday Beach

Fog has shortened the western horizon.  
Absent shells give odds this flat stone,  
spun across the chop of charcoal swells,  
will slice that sea near its Midway Islands.  
Aware that I am aimless today, two gulls edge  
toward ankle-deep water. The wind changes  
first in speed, then direction, stops, begins.  
Baffled cormorants are pinned against the sky.

On the northern edge of this vacant beach  
the blowing silhouettes of two old women  
whirl a peasant dance. Coastal music picks  
a rhythm from the wind that planes across  
the rise and fall of dunes. Sun is a bulb  
locked inside milk-thick sky. No shadows.  
The hemmed-in day is scaled to please the eye.  
I print the sand behind the quick slip of foam.  
My prints dissolve. I slide across the dark  
curve of a stranger's eye, then disappear for good.

## Old Story

Venus, the shamming bitch,  
ducks out when sirens raid  
the plans lovers think are pat.  
Courage, that myth of ghosts,  
goes up cold in smoke and leaves  
the yellow smile that saves  
your real face. Survival,  
that mad-eyed fox, stalks  
in every automatic smile.

And lovers, when bad times  
come around at last, when  
the walls of their private Troy  
are down, also choose to live.  
Or saying, "We choose to die,"  
Fortune, decked out in fine  
Greek smiles, ridicules  
simple hearts until they smile  
themselves, and the armies smile  
  
and everyone agrees, Greeks  
and Trojans, that life is short,

no one keeps his winnings  
in this game, and when we rape  
all your brides we will sigh  
philosophic in our beer  
telling you the only winner  
is the man without a stake.

And Venus, the shamming whore,  
palms her bait, her trump  
of spades, and wheels away  
to some new Troy  
where lovers have it made.

## Big Rain

Ambition that would soar  
would plunge on days like this.  
Not me. Like moss I feed  
on the gray overcast.  
Where my shadow could fall  
is no concern of mine.  
The world without shadow  
is a private room  
small enough to own.

## Tamalpais

The road past the highway  
is a foot trail. We follow  
the steep rise, gritting hard  
against loose shale we spill  
into a green expanse. The shadow  
of this mountain leans past the valley  
against brown hills spotted by stucco homes  
in rows. It moves, as if this old volcano  
could bulge once more with primal thunder.  
High up, a lofty jet chalks the sky.  
Take my hand. Before us lies  
the corner we must turn to face  
the low sun and western gale  
cool above the coming fog banks.  
Our shadows fall behind.  
On the west face scrub trees  
are scored and bent against  
the red sky spilling with wind.  
Mist is spreading quickly  
over hidden beaches.  
Our shouts of conquest  
blow past our ears. We near

the top, alone and winded,  
nowhere else to turn.  
The path falls away  
to crumbling shale and stunted shrub.  
Across the west rim of the world  
the sun is pooling its final orange.  
Past dissolving blue,  
stars pick up strength.  
We call for wings, raise our arms  
to wind, flap once and drop.  
Orange vapor trails are breaking up  
in the high jet stream gale.  
Birds are diving for their nests.  
Take my hand. It's time to go,  
there's nowhere else to turn.  
But wait, the searchlights  
of a distant grand opening  
are teasing dolphins from clouds!

### Narcissus In Hipboots

At noon you see yourself fish the sky.  
You stuff the mouths of trout with words.  
Light angles off the water to needle  
your vision but all you do is shade  
your eyes to nag a two-foot bull.

I thought I had you once, broke  
your prize head with a perfect stone  
but you were squaw, bloat  
scavenger, bait, unfit for pan.

I tossed you back.  
You curved for murk  
against the final roll.  
Deep in green  
you became a branch,  
then nothing,  
in the spinners of noon.

## Beach Man

Where dreams get tide-ditched and withered  
childhood's lost boats get beached, and you  
in your salt get weathered. With skin  
like a whaler's leather, you guard  
your sucker heart from surface bother.  
Though they drown your lovely bather,  
or let him die of weather, sing--  
sing tuneless in your aching salt  
above the beached and wailing father.

### Cliffs Near Oceanside

Past faces turn west to jump the future.  
Epic waves laugh the way high Greeks  
cheer a wedding or clap the birth of a son.  
And I am conscious only of my skin  
burnished white like the futile shield  
of an ancient shell.

Plunge the phased roll, strike for Japan,  
let the green roar drown your name,  
the fragment moon smile you west.  
This game ends here. Skin seems rare.  
Bone, priceless. Pretend to flesh  
once again the sovereignty of bone.  
Turn, climb these dunes, those cliffs,  
let a stone drop from heights where waves  
are wrinkles, wind supreme. Traffic back  
to reasoned walls where you console  
a way of life without an epic jump.

## The Logic of Guitars

January blows alive  
with the Tijuana sirocco  
and exploding skirts flag two-dollar bulls.  
Neon thighs flare red with flamenco heat  
to chords of night wild with tequila.

In Catholic countries whores are proud as priests.  
Give it meaning. Say pagans can breathe  
where protestants haven't polished the air.  
No matter. See those full-tit toreros  
making every dive their arena,  
strutting the challenge that brings  
each northern ducktail to communion.

They teach of pass and turn  
and how the matador's killing thrust  
is given by the bull.

The world above the Tijuana river  
spins with a purpose no one sings.  
Date palms test the wind for stray guitars.  
Nothing. Traffic. The rigid flight of women

from men who clown above a cardiac chill  
and claim the certain logic  
of several graveyard shifts.

Below the bordering river  
Mexico has no purpose.  
Black priests balance  
the rainbow whores,  
and shiftless Mexicans  
claim a policy of peppers,  
the logic of guitars.

### Hardboiled Easter

That day you went invisible croaking Eli  
until bored deadbeats sent out for vinegar in fun,  
and friends you left behind began to look ahead,  
anywhere but in,  
your first priests, the ants,  
carried the hard pellets of your blood  
to their queen. Your wounds were bright,  
you kept us on pins and needles  
thinking about those Roman spikes  
until we healed you, posthumously.

Ballad for a Crafty Buddhist

Tanzan you old puzzler,  
you spend the emperor's money  
filling young heads with theories  
and chuckle up your Japanese sleeves.  
That girl, did she see  
your glinting eye turn ambiguous  
in rain? Did she wait, fake distress?  
You caught her up, barged  
her over mud, but your hands,  
did they exult on secret flesh?

You knew all secrets are apples  
shaped for an original hand,  
that careful heads can't get this far  
while theories itch the brain.  
Your monkish friend, Ekido,  
called you dangerous in that rain.

On her own she could have bridged  
the intersection flood.  
But you, smelling danger's fun,

saw possibilities in the scene, like  
fractured lights from the buried sun.

Ekido, pure by brute force,  
fought the itch  
you ended at the source.

Kodak Blue

You ran for a rock perch where the sea paused  
but perched there too long. Sunlight burned  
green when afternoon came with dark design  
and nameless sea nymphs spied your hair.

I did not criticize you then. Your name  
became the shroud lines of my silk. You  
were in the air, above the chilled sand,  
true against the secret thrill of crowds.  
Heroic in slacks, I charged the slamming tide.

The danger was in the scene. You only laughed.  
Wet to the knees I crossed beds of tangled kelp,  
shouldered the stone stares of beach boys.  
The burn on my neck was the sun, rich  
with late brilliance for the salt. Later,  
slides would show harmless Kodak blue.

### The Day After Words

Here where the tide leaks past the beach bar  
to fill or drain this swamp dense with reeds  
and the thick smell of rot, everything ends.  
Long dead shacks end in a warped slump. Trees  
end that fed long on salt and now stump beside  
the path whose reasons end and ends itself  
at the edge of a deep-running ooze.  
Sunday, and that iron dredge brown with rust  
stands with herons sentinel of the still  
day and the gray solitude of morning.  
No near town has bells to ring this mired place.  
Surf, dull below grass dunes, paves silence  
thick. Our soft sighs reach our lips and stop.  
This is the day after words. Who will say  
that rusting dredge shapes history once and fades?

Bad Spell on West Beckwith

You walked six miles  
to the Buckhouse bridge  
with thoughts of why  
it isn't working out.

In our dark kitchen  
I wait, boiling coffee,  
reminding all my ghosts  
everything beautiful dies

and myself that miles  
have always been your cure.  
But what fast sedans brake for you  
because your walk is loose with sadness?

Across Beckwith, young oaks claim  
the last lights of day. Street lamps  
turn on in pairs. Those retired lovers  
next door, rocking in separated chairs,  
stare into separate nights.

## Sea Wall

Porcelain clams scale the walls  
of failing days. We lie silent  
as kelp under the assault of flies,  
in faked equilibrium between sun and sea.  
If only your thighs did not end in acetate  
polka dots I would explore them.  
I would cattle-tongue your salt,  
put words in your flesh,  
watch old dead language cry.

Once we swam naked as fish  
in a lake you called pristine  
and scaled in mud we rolled pristine.  
We laughed a lunar tongue in every dialect  
forgotten by day --you remember?  
But these are failing days.  
Our words are caught  
in a porcelain relief  
where water nymphs hold tridents  
or pass the time of day  
with somber dolphins in pink.