

Fairy Story

Martin Robertson

Her blistered fingers stumbling at their task
as time ran short
yet she completed of her nettlework
all but the second sleeve of the twelfth shirt,
leaving her youngest brother one swan's wing
—strong and beautiful
but powerless and grotesque
where a man's arm should spring.

Would he then,
since he could never wholly be a man,
happily have remained
an air-and-water-wandering swan?
Or did he gratefully recover
mankindness with its gifts and pains,
even proud perhaps to suffer
the flaunting symbol of a difference?