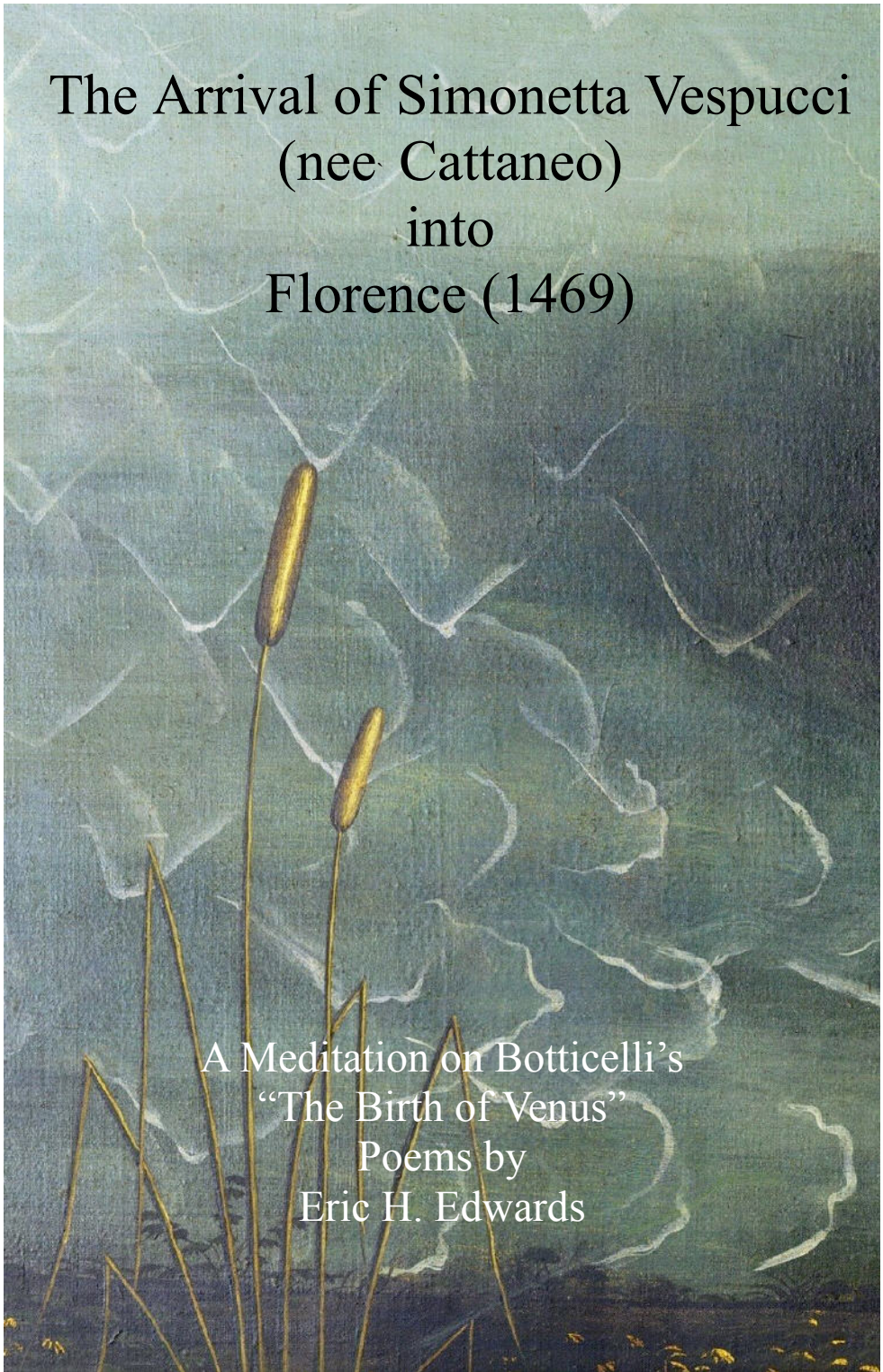


The Arrival of Simonetta Vespucci (nee Cattaneo) into Florence (1469)



A Meditation on Botticelli's
"The Birth of Venus"
Poems by
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A Meditation on Botticelli's Venus

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4.

The cattails start up from below;
blossoms of cherry flutter in the air,
land on the wings of ... angels? Also
the cattails starting up from below
are actually blossoms too and float as fair
as the exotic flowers we have come to grow.
The cattails start up from below,
while blossoms of cherry flutter in the air.



A Meditation on Botticelli's Venus



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Poetry Pamphlet
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1.

The fact is her modesty
may be misleading,
the fact is she is immoderately pale
as anyone can see,
the fact is she is not herself
a physical fact at all—
the question of what is seen
what is being seen may be
unspeakable and unanswerable though
viewable,
given the flowers in the supposed air
given the odd angle of the shell
the shell like a landing craft
in an open forward rush
exposing her to people
she doesn't know, may never, may not care to.
Is there no disgrace in standing
at this bullet-proofed picture
and none in its design
made for gaping
what weapons does she caress
other than the hair,
a breeze of indeterminate motive
a manufactured breeze
not affecting her in the slightest.

All of **us**, however,
will be dead soon enough.

3.

I think Botticelli said
“there's not a single symbol in it,
there's not as yet a Rothko red.”
I think Botticelli said
he was ahead of his time; (one must submit
perhaps), though all true artists end up dead.
“I think,” Botticelli said,
“there's not a single symbol in it.”



2.

My childhood trees are dreams,
my mother's dress a flower print;
nothing is better here than it seems.
My childhood trees are dreams,
I cannot manage what they mean;
huge trunks and leaves like elephants.
My childhood trees appear in dreams,
and my mother's dress, a flower print.



2.

That poem number one,
that beginner seedling
awkward duckling
tenderly naive fingers in doorways
just as seeing nakedness,
not one's own, not owning nakedness,
that where do we go from here song,
light doesn't filter her
she is inexplicable
she is your soul
every shell on the beach
a hard elegy, nakedness arrived.
Clothed in coming Spring, wind-cased,
disordering, distracting, disabling,
she is unfortunately breathtaking,
that kind of God,
her hair is closer to wet paint.
Every poet knows what it is
like to have a mouth full of wet paint.
Every poet knows what it is
like to have a mouth stuffed with flowers
instead of words.
Instead of words
the winds blow, body breath,
they blow until she arrives,
until she has a body,
until she has a body like ours.
Every poet knows what that is.

3.

With no history,
not of this world
or that contemporary cosmos
compelling,
the fist at your nose causes
no blood, all flowers,
afloat like fairies,
flowers issuing from the nostrils
the mouth, like blood, like vibrissa.
With no history, no root
she is only mildly attentive
to yours or anyone's history
as it informs her present
and on her present
all of us cling like paint to canvas
stopped agape; it cannot be agape';
even with all that distance
contact of skin on skin,
a groan, she has muscle,
a sigh ripples like breath on water
a word oh if only there was
anything to assuage this
impossible, unavoidable, engagement.

1.

The Painting Itself

I admire each detail of its unreality.
A map of my naiveté and desires
would look just like this queer and soft sea.
Admiring each detail of its unreality,
horizontal wavelets like words, in the trees
gold, the supernal, paradoxical unity,
the sensual baptism of myth this requires,
to admire each detail of its unreality,
the map of my naiveté and desire.



7.

If you're a reductionist
reproducing her to a fatigue
is a difficulty
the way saying goodbye to someone
you have seen every day,
reducing her to a fatigue
where myth meets modernity
ragged and a ruin,
absurd as sand on a beach,
as novels are the center
of the painter's color wheel,
where did that life become unconnected
the seal of the mammal
that just ends -- gut-wrenching
how long, how detached
and now a little bottle cap
the tip of an intrusion
that belongs to no one;
the artist made a baby
full grown, and if it lived
truly, it would be dead
to love, to continue to reproduce,
your eyes, your interior space
needs to hang it up
with a wood frame,
a modest covering,
and nails.

4.

Her face (detail)
I don't know if she breathes
has to breathe
she may breathe by sidling
next to someone on a bench
as in an antique deer park
the trees roundly clipped
and either her dress is
white or sky blue with flowers
or her hair
catches on her nipples and falls
generously into one hand
as intense as clean gold
she leans into whoever is there
right now
breathes in the air coming out of them
every molecule of oxygen
until they are just a plaid bag
like a bagpiper's bag collapsed
a pneumothorax she is that strong
she is Blake's tiger
she takes someone's hand
walks them into the woods
where eyes fail, breath fails,
every gesture is air
brushing against a clock
or a word, words, more words.

5.

Prosaically,
this painting can't belong any more.
The context has moved on,
The painting just changes rooms.
Finding its pleasures
requires entering an ever darker space,
no electricity, no sunshine,
no smoky window can trick her.
What ocean she apparently
arose from or came over on;
where she goes
anatomically awkward
like a person with a club foot
or notable trendelenberg,
like David with a huge hand
like a deer hunt taking place
in a dreamt forest,
an envelope black inside
(white outside for the address)
what to put into that dark space,
how about, speaking prosaically
how about poetry?
The only artifact
as universal as the beloved.

You are looking at yourself
through a darkness
for which there is no remedy.



6.

The young man
blowing wind and maybe flowers
is not me in so far as
I would like it –
what would I like?
what everyone who writes
wants
will forever want
and want until dying
pushes me from my desire.
As I look I wonder
is the boy-god one of his models?
Why does that little toe
turn under as if
this was reality.
The right foot. Forward.
the paradox Boticelli wished
a reality,
I could say it in prose
but then it would just be
a sentence,
and we have already been
keenly sentenced
with words no less;
elsewhere to death.

