

ELEGIAC: GEORGE WHIPPLE

(MAY 24, 1927–MAY 29, 2014)

SUSAN MCCASLIN

No glibness for my friend the poet
who spoke straight with wry curves
airy basilicas grounding into earth-studies

I lay out his books on the kitchen counter
counting the ways he spoke
leafing through his whimsical sketches

then the reams of postcards
letters tumbling, Thanksgiving, Easter
Christmas, “just for nothing” cards

one imaging a skyful of cumulous—
nothing besides

Clipped-out cartoons: man sitting
in armchair, calling to his wife
“I’m in here, rereading the great poets, myself among them”

(For him, a cautionary tale about pride—
in his case, indubitably true)

A letter: “Thank you very much
for your kind and generous
response to *The Seven Wonders of the Leg*
Such feed back is precious and so rare”

Speaking of “wonders of the leg”
my eye rests now on his gift
that one day arrived in a box:

ceramic carousel Pegasus
twirling on a musical stand, neck decked
with soft clusters of pale pink roses

violet wings aloft, right foot broken—
wounded Pegasus
What can words do but susurrate sighs

sing May, the month he signed off?:
I came but never arrived,
I go but do not depart