

# 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*