

PHILIP NEILSEN

QUASIMODO

It is the cheap tricks that now enrage me,
the molten lead, the beams of wood,
the gutting of a fish-faced Count;
yet they say that was my power.

I could have easily gaped at girls,
picked flowers and wrung their hearts —
but instead I chose my shape,
the crushing strength of ugliness
before which beauty pukes.

And now blonde Esmeralda, housed with brats,
must think sometimes of that force —
the scattering of crowds before my face,
the thrill that shook her
when she touched my hump.