

Passages of Heart

Poetry of the Unification Movement

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Edited by Kevin Convery and Eric Bobrycki
Unification Theological Seminary • Barrytown, New York

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Dedicated to Heung Jin-nim, our dear brother and good friend. His life was an endearing example of love and piety, and abides with us today as a “light unto our path”.

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Introduction

Passages of Heart is an anthology of poems by some members of the Unification movement. Its expressions of love and life offer us a composite sketch of a dedicated people pursuing their relationship with God. This collection is delightfully unique in that it repeatedly knocks down the sacred/secular wall which then allows us to find God in new and wondrous places. It is a work born out of our love and gratitude for our spiritual Father, Sun Myung Moon.

The foundation of *Passages* lies with the first UTS anthology of poems entitled *Signs of Presence, Love and More*. *Signs* was developed on a thematic or topic construct; *Passages* delves into particular poets of the Unification movement and represents a new level of growth. The editors of this edition would hope that a third work, something more comprehensive and inclusive of our worldwide movement, would be undertaken—such a work would be a wonderful offering.

Passages of Heart has taken many years to unfold. It first began with Susan Reno in 1981. She became inspired to undertake such a task, and then, she passed it on to me upon her graduation from the Unification Theological Seminary. I am indebted to her enthusiastic support and concern. Special thanks go to our President David S.C. Kim. It has been his dedication to the arts, both spiritually and financially, that actually allowed for the beginning and completion of this work.

Thanks go to our friends Arthur Herstein and Nina Magnin who contributed their time and talents in typesetting, layout and design. The wonderful illustrations were done by Angela Eisenbart.

The editors and reviewers truly stand out in my heart—looking back to days we spent together in Barrytown creates a deep longing inside. I hope they continue with new discoveries and creative expressions worthy of their God-given talents: Bill Brunhofer, Robert Chaumont, Kate Clarke, Mary Jo Downey, Brian Goldstein, Michael Huntington and Marilyn Morris. Each helped in making *Passages of Heart* come true for us all.

I must especially thank our senior editor, Kevin Convery. His insight, humor, and encouragement uplifted us all above the seriousness of our task—enough so that we could see it through to the joy of its completion.

It has long been my dream to live in a world peopled with men and women, sons and daughters of true love and great creativity. The making of this anthology has strengthened that dream. To all who offered their poems, to all who read and are enriched, may God bless you and keep your heart and dream full of hope, for His kingdom draws ever near.

Eric Bobrycki
Oklahoma City
November 29, 1989

It has now been nearly a decade since myself and a few students at the Unification Seminary began compiling the material for "Passages of Heart," specifically the decade of the eighties, soon to come to a close. I'm sure that I echo the sentiments of many in observing that it has been a dramatic and often bewildering ten years. It has also been a period marked by a veritable avalanche of expression from every cause and faction imaginable. One might well ask, "Does the world really need one more poetry book?"

The answer to that question, for me, has come in unexpected ways from my surroundings over the past five years. My present home, the state of Tennessee, is an area rich in natural beauty, existing, in many places, in strange contrast to the reminders of an intense and tragic era. The ghosts of the past seem ever present here; standing alongside the mute rows of cannon at Shiloh or Missionary Ridge, looking out from grainy photographs or from the somber eyes of countless bronze soldiers. In the soft clarity of an autumn afternoon it is easy to find oneself wondering about the hearts and minds that once moved behind these relics of the violent transition known as the American Civil War. In my many walks through the Tennessee battlefields I have come to feel a sense of kinship with these souls, these men and women who, not unlike ourselves, faced a time when the social order and psychic frame of reference for their world was changing forever. The questions they lived, and died with, about human dignity, freedom, the meaning of suffering; questions for them inescapably real, were also my questions.

Today, as then, we find ourselves confronted on every side with painful issues over basic values. Battered by the winds of change we grope for vision. Everywhere there is revolution, both political and spiritual. What forces underlie this compelling state of restlessness?

It is our hope that here, through the words of the Unificationists, individuals intimately and passionately concerned with the destiny of humankind, we can offer far more than a collection of feelings finely expressed. We hope these "passages" will shed light in a unique way on our own historical moment, and the implications it holds for all of us.

I believe that this small group of tempered idealists, far from being an isolated "special interest group," does reflect the deepest concerns and currents of late twentieth century America. It is also my personal hope that this anthology will be a memorial to the courage and sacrifice that underlies the words within it. May it be a tribute to men and women everywhere who, in the face of engulfing nihilism, uphold the essential dignity of the free human heart and the divine love that guides it.

Kevin Convery
Chattanooga, Tennessee
November 29, 1989

Winter Meditation, Barrytown, 1975

In the swift time
between then and now
a chest of gems
is set between my hands.

Winter silver sunlight
crackling through a white
and golden pane
shatters

on the cobblestone
of chapel archways,
freezing the moment
in misty breath ---

The lead is scratched
on notebook pages,
the Word is etched
in a tender flame

retracing every
constellation of
time in patterns
of snowflakes on sunsets.

upon the Heart,
rekindled; in auras
glowing coral a
rose of light

begins to bloom,
still covered with
the sodden, splintered
chips of absent night

but growing....

Myriad of brilliant
blocks of light shed
onto the flagstones
of a cool floor..

floating colors
flourish there in
thick bouquet and
fragrances of

violet and
amber incense
the spirit into
songs as sweet,

Early
in the morning
the rose sun turns
bronze then gold then silver-white,
sparkling the diamond snow,
burning coldly on the surface
until
the day goes down under
the heavy black coal of night....

like a precious
pebble-bottom
underneath a
clear and swirling

mountain stream:
the chill refreshes....

But then ---

the stars sing ---
and the taste of crystal
scintillates
upon the tongue.

The play of light upon the waters never ends!

**IN A POOR BLACK AREA OF MIAMI;
A Little Black Girl Rushed Up and
Took My Hand. My Heart Almost
Couldn't Take It.**

Something fleeting caught my eye
I looked down
A big smile so far from shy
And a little girl

The trusting way she took
My hand caused such pangs
As to make me understand
The rift between my ideal
And me

And so making me more free

In a second she came
Smiled
And went
Just a little girl
But heaven sent

And like clouds
Sunsets
Rains and tears that
So fleetingly have filled up years
Of experiences Thoughts
Captured Lost
Yet somehow taught
The invisible me
That life's essence
Is indeed
Felt in purity

I See

I see
Old people,
Full of memory.
Beggar-like, eyeless, toothless
They look with their forgotten feelings
And find no taste in today, no hope tomorrow
Passed, sleeping, filled with yesterday.

I see
Middle-aged people,
Full of worry.
Midas-like, seeking eternity
In riches, motions and lotions,
Muchly concerned about
Nothing—and straight are fearful
To feel.

I see
Young people,
Full of energy.
Train-like, never wanting
To stop and commit
Only willing to refuel, to travel
Not ready to arrive.

I see
People.
Women, men
Children all
Calling out in endless motion,
Commotion. Mostly feeling for themselves
Mute, dying, desperate
For a fix—angry for
Something missing.

I see
Myself,
Fearing the mob.
The barbed wire and P.O.W. look
Frightens me.
The wire is now rusty, weak and broken
But they are like starved hounds
They do not break and run—
They only know to feed now or die.

I see faces faded darkly in the mirror
My God.
Burning eyes tell this story
History, the future, days distant.
As ever the call comes
Already I am moved and being moved
Strangely, in heroic manner
Not really a hero, but among them.
If, when, I stop and look at the mob
Alone... Grateful for the tide.
Seeing the moon
My heart
Full.

Resentment

Heart.
Tight-fisted, tough.
Readiness is all
Let the blows fall.

Those who try
Will find these windows dry
To the bone.

Razor-sharp coiled-tight
Serpent's tooth
Strike.

Tight-fisted, tough,
To the bone.

Oh heart!

Deep into deep and deeper still
Years away from light and warmth
Nothing but I am.
Cold and naked like these winter trees
Who once paraded proudly
Now scrambling for a covering leaf.
Naked and cold like Lear,
Unable though to rant and rage
Going gently toward the black night.
I am told that the deep woods have their
Comforting silence—they now resonate
A dull harmony with my cold bones and noisy teeth.

This winter will kill me.
That, I always say.
How deep, how cold can I go
And be, and still know?

The Harbinger

Beyond yesterday lies passion.
Only my shadow knows now...
Sun-sugared hope falling
Manna-like from the heavens
Glistens my days, squints eyes
Forcing a cloud to die.

Baroness of chance, why does your
Shimmer of near brightness rest upon me?
You know eve shades all with her
Reach and only alone a summer's song
Must break to face fall.

Always, always the cat-like
Countess courting with swans,
Dreams of flights and distant kingdoms.
Or was it freedom?
Ah, but feathers is art of higher times.

Oh, haunt on high fairy
Glitter me with your tomorrow.
But nemesis you shall not be
For through you ganders lay eggs.

Vex not my ghost Helen;
You shall not be called my own:
The box was left open
For each man to close.

The Spider

There is a spider in my mind
Who races through the thought-tangled abyss
Making hollow vibrations
Stirring whispers of skins and skeletons
Finding only echoes of life long sung silent.

Picking over shriveled dry words
He turns them over, touches, pokes them—
Waiting for some sign of resurrection.
Hope buzzes, passion squirms,
Like little children caught by cotton candy
Get stuck on the merry-go-round
The carnival ends in bundled webs of despair.

There is a spider in my mind
When first we do conceive
Which breeds many-legged dreams to trick me
Past despair and tells me there is patience
With the dead—The dead fear not death
And the living weep no more the darkness.
The spider sucks deep
Searching out souls to sup on.

I will not weep

Father
Life ain't easy
I wonder
How was it for you?

The ocean is smiling
The ocean is deep
My soul is crying
But I will not weep.

Life's Cruel Jest

Love is written in
 the sand
If it is written by
 the hand
Of jealousy or doubt.
Scathing lies, weary eyes
Hopeful mind that saw
 the best.
Looking now for peaceful
 ways
That tease and scorn —
 Life's cruel jest.

matchless

life suggests its own sound (round and unround)
rhyme, rhythm, time distance; each has
its own universe, part to play, day
unbound, word to say: unique, antique or
otherwise ways unwise when set beside
others—and, what's so, ain't
necessarily.

on shakespeare's sonnets

old friend,
read once again these tunes so finely wrought
remembering the certain man they taught;
not him to whom was made the frank appeal,
but he who by dear payment, dearly bought
the gentle wisdom of the balanced wheel.

and let your new attention, though it will
upon its own direction steer, yet still,
find in old phrases, old friends something new
for future green is hid in quiet hill
and evolution does bare corners fill.

so, new perceptions split one into two;
and these together turn new worlds to view.

We shall go laughing soon into the rain
in twos and threes and families newly made.
Never again alone down through the glade
shall we in solitude feel the sharp pain
that distance brings.

For now a new hope hastens to be heard
above the aimless din of these our days
as from the sun new stream more living rays
than ever man has known. Listen: the word
of love loud sings.

The Balanced Builder

Now boasting to the earth in its mid-day
the sun sends its command to all below
flinging swift striving rays to surely sow
change, and new forms take shape upon the way,
the uncut block and frame work in the soil,
that womb of elements sun's rays excite.
And in this birthplace blending does ignite
the fire of life, to catch, to hold, to toil
upon its task. And grand complexity
unfolds. True influence of form on form
deed on deed, reveals the deeper norm.
And man's unveiled cast in perplexity;
stalwart opponent of the inner voice,
dogging each step his certain mind might make.
Thus, waste and failure follow in his wake.
And all the flotsom tells the poorest choice.

Ah, man,
thou inspiration of the earth and sun;
thou breath of all the teeming universe!
Do not destroy yourself with ignorance.
Taste of the living good and quickly shun
full homage that is paid the heartless will,
and all the duty given to desire.
The earth reels in the throes of waste you sire.
It profits none to drink beyond his fill.

Incontinence infects the too-worked land
and may defower all the waiting stock
upturning every value. Every rock
carelessly disturbed, disturbs what's planned.
Only the balanced builder can revive
who husbands every corner in himself,
forsaking interest in mere whim and pelf
the age is wont to praise. Man may survive
to foster change just as the fiery sun
whose greatest strength lies mid-way in the run.

White Swans

White swans paired by the new sun climb
above the tall triumphant trees
and these green resplendent hills
out of the long and sorrowful night of
waiting, and sail together into the welcoming
day.

How many long years have the great wings
beat alone in the empty sky endlessly seeking
refuge on dry land, the dry and desolate
and brokenhearted land?

Yes, there have been visions of a new world
a wet and wonderful land of hope
where scattered seedlings find peace.
Consolation can be found, too, and winds
of love, showers of love finally fall upon
hands that heal, hands that know life's
meaning, man's destiny and begin to work the
wornout clay.

“Let us remake them in our image, the likeness
of a True man and True woman.
Let us breathe into them the breath of our life,
and let us make the white swans fly.”

Children's Day

What is a Children's Day without a child
Awakened in our hearts; and in our eyes
The happiness of life and quick surprise
Painting anew our face in colors wild
As May-flowers bouncing on a windy hill?
Could we but know the hand that made them well.

Let's view their shapes and colors as they run
Their course beneath the holy, truthful trees.
First, blush the tenderest offerings, then these
Bold in their reds under the dashing sun.
So does our child's heart peek slowly round,
Then shatter silence with a merry sound.



A new suit

Jesus
never had a suit
wore sandals
a robe

If that

I was fitted for a suit
today
sky blue in plaid
thin beams of blazing sun
measured fine
designed sublime

Sandals and a robe
I've known
some
perhaps enough

Mother Ruth bestowed this blessing
Mother Mary never could
NOT THAT SHE DIDN'T WANT TO
She did
She cried

What heart comes with this
I ask
The heart of
generations
Such endless foundation
The Heart of God

Jesus
never had a suit
Pray he does
now

the winter from rocky mountains

i recall
once in a dream lit past
a scene
yet i must have been there
a thousand times
a hilltop crest view unending
crisp
 cool
 white
undistilled air of razor purity
sugar-snow drifted sparkled trees of pine green
needled majesty like no ceremony
soldiers poised to march below
to the hazed valley floor
for purposed meeting of glib stream
now crystal ice
what celebration of compliment

i know i must have been there
many times
what now the price
to return just once more
many times i returned just once more
not valued enough in appreciation
not knowing the last once more wish
would come from a prison
of concrete jungled cacophony bound intrusion
and soulless disharmony

look i must have been there
a hundred times
i have a post card
see that view

agonizing sensory abuse

look i've been there
once i remember
do you know what i'd give to return
i'd probably cry
probably

look at this pretty card

tall timber

I saw a tree
adorned with light
it was a tree in a forest
it was a tree betwixt
many others
yet glowing
from a central point
and as I looked around
others
more trees
were beginning to shed
that darkish cast
and come to life
dancing
in the forest
in the night
when
not a soul was around
for they do ya know
dance
their needles held high
they embrace each other
'till morning comes nigh
and they must
once again
be

stalwart sculptures
for man to
take note of
to smile at
the beauty of and wonder what
makes them just
stand there
year after countless year
in but one place
a few know
some have seen the light
some have been there
dancing in the night

the philosopher pyun hae soo

impish playful proud
a bee battling academic ants and spiders
stinging to life pipsqueaks and bookbags
High I.Q. idiots throw their technical treatises at him
He dodges and dances out among the fresh flowers...

shortstop stopped short
slave for 27 years at the feet of teachers
Parroting their every inane obfuscation
A Triumphant Jacob he now has Aristotle on the mat
"Perseverance furthers. Complete the cycle. Be humble. Imitate the water."

dersu uzala he is a guide in the forest
Ecological, different, independent, incongruous
where new york rich buy \$70 perfume for their dogs,
where howard hughes, paranoid, lives only on Campbell soup,
where boredom can be the motivation for murder.

"There is a Big Aspect to be considered,
The superior man's obsession to kindle within...
Can you keep your mountain of ego under the earth?
Can you carry your parents on your back?
Can you walk lightly on thin ice in spring?"

once ultimately cynical cautiously now he asks:
"Can these Moonies not yet Sunnies, Kingies,
Can they convert Earth's fate to destiny?
Can they truly play the role of host?
Can rudderless America be put on course?"

diviner, he picks up the *I Ching* and *Tao Teh Ching*
books that shut their mouths for lesser men
and swimming through their rich suggestiveness
fathoms deep into heart recesses.
He knows Truth lurks behind a hundred walls.

“How do you know what’s fortunate and unfortunate
when the Tao’s a paradox
and two boys climbed up a chimney
and the one remaining clean ran and washed himself first?
And the fat boy on the poster proclaims ‘God don’t make no junk!’?”

“It’s Mitsui vs. Mitsubishi
Passionate ocean vs. raindrops of reason
Children’s tales vs. learned dissertations
Bargaining Life for a penny, or bargaining Life for Everything.
Invest yourself, for after 40 you’re responsible for your face.”

And as the chorus sings on so happy,
where are the voices that used to be?
And why did thirty thousand proud young men
betray us?
Did they betray, or was it we who made
them leave?
And we spoke of love for our great nations,
and we preached of one world harmony,
but as we spoke did we know that they
were sobbing
ever softly on the laps of you and me?
In another age I might have killed you.
In another time you'd have chained my hands.
But the love or hate that flows now
between us,
is the love or hate that flows throughout our land.

School at Barrytown

Are we little minds
Blinking in the darkness
Like Gollum in Plato's Cave
Wrestling with a thought
Until our thigh goes out of joint
And we wonder
What's the point?

Or have we understood
That points do not exist?

But people do exist—
Within you
Without you
Hovering all about you

Knocking on the door
Anxious to share
To raise and to be raised.

This is the time and place
To cease to be
and to become.

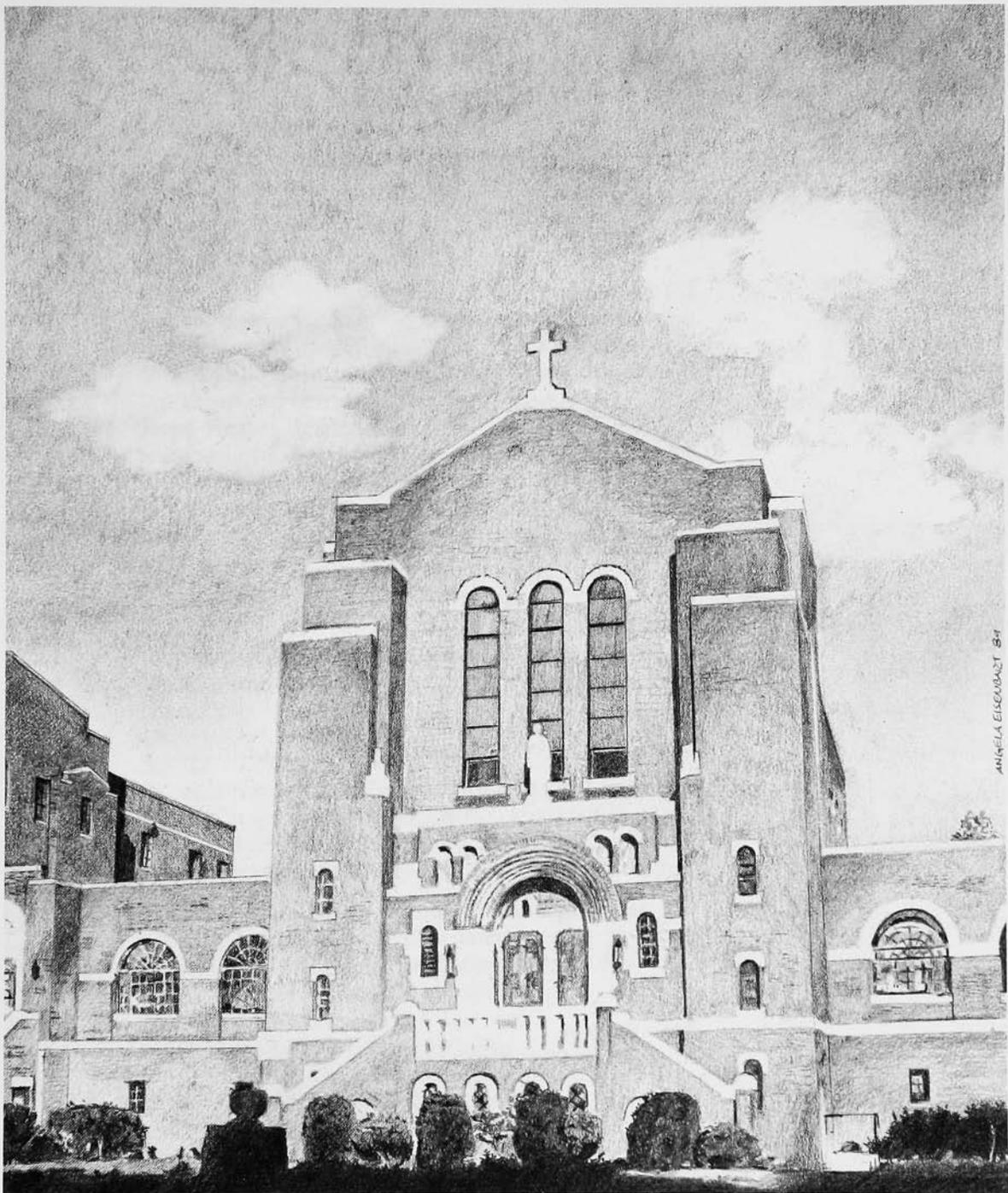
Are we little minds
Blinking in the darkness
Like Gollum in Plato's cave

Memorizing names that have no faces
Pass through the night and leave no traces?

It takes the child so very long
To learn that do re mi,
But how dem folks do love to dance
When the thumb hits middle C.

And we can raise the roof
And we can raise the dead

Sing a little chorus:
O dem bones, dem dry bones
O dem bones, dem dry bones



ANGELA ELSCHMIDT '84

It's about time
Some living water flowed
Through Rat's alley
Where dead men lost their bones

O dem bones, dem dry bones

Are we little minds
Blinking in the darkness
Like Gollum in Plato's cave

Spitting spit wads at the wall?
Or have we begun to put teeth in our thought
Like Peter Comestor,
Peter the Eater,
Chewing up books into great wit wads
And trajecting them down through time?

And others have done the same
Maimonides, Avicenna, Bhaktighosa, Confucius

From the four corners of the Earth
The culture wads converge and merge
With the New White Stone
At Barrytown.

Are we little minds
Blinking in the darkness
Like Gollum in Plato's cave?

Or
Are we open
To creating something new?

Indian Photograph

Cry
the shrunken plains
ravaged, staked, confined.
When Paha Sappas' yellow heart was found,
ten thousand centuries of silence were shattered with its pines.
Long Knives defiled the mountain church,
weighed out her price in golden sand.
Now a longer silence covers them.
Gold dust cannot buy what dust reclaims.
But you, American Horse,
from the grained grey past, still look
as the eagle looks from its wind lashed throne.

Old one,
turn away these obsidian eyes.
You are no more
than a paper relic, the worn reflection of brutal legends long outgrown.
Unbeliever,
ask your brothers, Joseph, Crazy Horse or Gall,
Osceola betrayed from the steaming swamp,
Satanta sagging in his chains.
They will tell you it is done.
And the eagle flees to its craggy dome.

Saved, American Horse, into grave and book,
only the land has kept your names.
The wind forgets in the buffalo grass
waving on the hills that hide your bones,
where once a red salvation burned
to set the sun with plagues and guns,
forgets the dream that died in a howitzer's shriek,
as the eagle shrieks in a dying tongue.

Mute image,
from picture lips no words return.
Wind sculpted cheeks, long since, have softened into clay again.
Only the eyes speak still,
“For nation follows nation...”
I close the book with a closing mind,
but your presence presses through every page,
insistent as birth,
as the surge of spring under frozen seas-
“You shall never be alone...”
And still you look, sad and strange as prophets look,
unchanged, as the eagle looks,
into our own changed time.

Autumn Madonna (to Marybeth)

Autumn madonna,
clear-eyed mother of the iris,
of the orphaned kitten bristling under midnight rain,
as the dropped stone sinks in the green pool,
as the ripe moon drops into dusk, veil by violet veil,
her shade descends to touch the barren backbones of ancient Tuscan hills,
to cloak the ragged shoulders of weathered mountains.

I have heard her faint, grieving cry in the hoarse throats of distant geese,
have seen her windswept dance in the small blue flame of bellflowers.
She knows the wounded sparrow fluttering somewhere in the snow,
and the quivering knot of the soldier's heart.

She plunges down, a reckless maeneid, in the sinew of panther dark hair.
In vast and silent ecstasy, the Milky Way unfolds behind her eyes.
I have felt her drifting down with apple blossoms in the vaporous hush
of cricket Junes, or rising on the damp scent of trampled dogwood,
floating upward like choir voices in April evenings.

I have abandoned her to arrogant, thickening years,
to the stony chill of cities lost in the shadows of rotting ages,
shivered beneath street lights, numb to the touch of her delicate breath,
have sensed her faint whispering return in thin winter sunlight,
known her mercuric smile in the scattering of startled fish,
and stood in shattered dawns watching dead dreams pass
like rusted leaves on webs of rivers, to the sea's embrace.

And here,
somehow, beyond another cycle of prideborn pain,
as if despairing memory grew dull and lost itself to innocence again,
to the sound and smell of home regained,
she smiles in my sister's face.

Remembrance — Testimony of St. Joan

My name is mixed
with words unwished for.
Saint and soldier seemed never meant for me.

My hand never learned to love the touch of plated glove,
nor warmed itself on the broadsword's hilt.
These eyes were bruised, and sick of young men's blood.
Under wool and mail this bosom chafed.

By evening watchfires, in October's chill, I listened for Angelus bells
flooding autumn dusks, in skies where English arrows never flew.
and dreamed of secret streams breaking black skinned earth,
of whispered vespers lost for rattling dawns on fields of dust and steel.

In earth-stained clothes and sun-bleached hood, my flocks
abandoned with childhood for the sake of a vision's stoic word,
I searched the halls of doubting lords to find the king the Father chose.

My young heart shrank from burning war.
Soldiers jokes scraped raw my ears.
In defiant smiles I hid my tears,
and tender limbs in sleeves of mail.
The fertile ground a hundred seasons
had sprouted only rows of pikes, a barren crop of iron sheaves.
The sickle rusted with the scythe.
France was reaped with wounds and tears.
By wounds and tears my spirit learned,
until Goliath staggered before a girl.

Beneath the scorched embattlements and battered walls of Orleans,
I gave a boy his promised throne and a land its king.
In distant Lorraine the furrows froze.
Pale flakes fell where my mother stood,
waiting and aging in her peasant door,
where the sparrow begged beside the wren.
And my ears longed for familiar tongues,
but turned themselves to harder tones.

By heaven called and earth betrayed,
judge and jailer kept my final hours.
Far from Charles or Orleans,
no saving cry escaped that prison stone or rose to split the sullen air.
For the heretic-witch they raised a pyre
and soberly planned a witch's end.
With a "God have pity on your soul...",
my flesh was stripped with rasps of flame.
A few eyes misted in the streets of Rouen.
A shiver passed through the Saxon guards.
Beyond crackling veils, a churchman droned.
I never heard.
But somewhere from the bronze throats of bells,
the Father cried and called again.

The Time Before

“These are but shadows of the things that have been...”

Charles Dickens — *A Christmas Carol*

4:12,4:13

The table clock, with glowing face,
marks its place in the breathing dark.
Minutes, years melt in and out of sleep.
The stilled mind finds all pasts present here,
all loves regained.

The trappings of habit, inanimate vague shapes,
hang limp upon a chair.
Threads of grey, familiar to the factual daylight, in aging hair,
are seen by no one here.
Eyes, awake, search the black screen for specks of light,
waiting for merciful fatigue to take its hold again,
until called to duty like my belt and coat, to the hungry moment's
pressing claims.
Through quiet hours the clock face burns, a watchfire in the hidden
countries of the night.

The buried pulses of the house seem to hum and beat,
and rolling into dreams they beat to rhythms of a time now gone;
another house, a long past winter,
a furnace rumbles in its depths, where we, young squirrels,
run black smudged and breathless through shadowed passageways
to huddle by the warm secret glow.
Outside, the skies moved down to stir the earth with expectation of
early snow.
What power sent it to the world that I once knew?

4:23,4:24

Spring, in a later time...
The scent of crocuses floats upon an evening mist.
We ride the season and its blessings, dolphins in a perfumed wave,
never guessing the breaking swell will dash us cruelly on the shore.
Eyes bulging in pained surprise, throats seared raw by the alien air,
a black tide roars around the wreckage, recedes, and we grow whole again,
but changed.

4:32

Roads swerve back from stars too far.
Old pains are dulled in summer's sober routine,
Slowly, the broken seed unfolds her roots to struggle down
through moulding layers, to feed the wound where the green shoot springs.
Years pass.
Faces appear and go their way again,
in laughter formed, in loss and tears,
transformed by insight hard gained in moments few remember,
but all's remembered here.

4:44

Autumn, and evening rain falls softly on bronze and decaying stone.
Statues of soldiers and statesmen keep their patient places in the
park,
bathed, through ragged leaves, in yellow streetlight splashes,
With fixed gaze, beneath knotted metal brows, they guard the posts
they've kept since I was young.
In unflinching silence they stand and look where your living eyes
looked once...

5:09

The first heel click echoes in the street below.
Dark walls are touched with match-flame blue.
Pale light spreads across sheeted plains to call me to the day's concerns.
In the misty park the bronze guardians watch dawn's advance,
but their hour does not return.

Poem for Ireland — (to my father Francis Convery)

Among travelers I stood today,
before a stone memorial, in a land enmeshed with stone
where stark, rich green, too green almost to be believed,
bursts, mad for life,
between ribs of granite grey;
...and strained to hear with spirit ears
the spirit tones of chiselled words,
once razor edged,
softened now by rain and time.

“Murmurs passed along the valleys like the banshee’s lonely croon
And a thousand blades were flashin’ at the risin’ of the moon.”
I flinched, surprised to find the song still cut into my own smooth slate,
touching more than I have known
and more than I alone could feel,
freedom’s hunger, sharp beneath the slaver’s heel,
and, sad to say, the barbed remains of undigested hate.

Who remembers now;
Or cares to learn the secret of the wild goose’s rasping cry?
—the starved and crying centuries,
the battered dreams of dignity—
flinty hills and quick-limbed boys plunging to the cobalt sea;
the hills to stay, the boys not to return.
Who hears the echo in these lush glens,
hurried through by tourists on the bed and breakfast plan,
of long silenced strains of rebel tunes,
the muffled clatter of farm tools honed for battle in desperate hands,
moon-bathed faces, death-grimed,
having so many times already died
when life was forfeit for a song?

Land of fairies, leprechaun's haunt,
these enchanted springs and veiled skys,
alive with light in ever-changing shafts and waves,
have charmed our foreign eyes;
But look again.

Another land lies here, it seems, behind the tapestries of legend's mist,
a soil shocked to stricken calm
by brothers locked and drained in Ares' fist.

Here, once, a fair haired Abel came
with Lord and law to Gaelic Cain.

Here Providence froze in lethal pride
as lord himself the younger became.
And through the scarred and plundered ages,
this verdant ground cried with the blood
that pumped too proud in English hearts—
too unforgiving in Irish veins.

When souls are iron, who knows or cares anymore whose God will rule
or which child raised first the killing stone?

Who lays to rest this stained inheritance
that has lain, too young, too many brothers down?
What healing wisdom, born of history's pain,
can smooth, like the rain, these grief-gouged slabs,
can cover, as the grass, in living shrouds,
this worn green isle again?

Rite of Passage

Where are they;
all the passing
forest places,
the pine carpeted chambers
falling back
off the trail, unmarked
save by shredded streams of sunlight
fading now.
Places,
visited once,
like Florentine piazzas polished silver blue
in cool autumn moonlight,
where the soft purr of pigeon chords
entwines with reckless laughter and the bubbling mantra
of a fountain;
places, more than far away.

With eyes, grown heavier,
tempered, wise guardians
of the slow unfolding of children's lives,
we talk and pass colored slides,
fragments of a time outgrown.
We claim to remember,
but no one can, not really-
the lost, wild hours,
the beat of questioning souls and hands
on aged unanswering ruins,
unanswered pains;
the fire inside that would not die
on endless driven walks
in endless, endless rains;
yet was dying, as we were, even then.

Do they run today, the trains that flung us
through dark and unmapped valleys in the night?
What of the waxen candle pools
that scattered the illuminated pages of our dreams
on parchment colored walls,
to be
opaque and dense again at dawn?

Where are the doors,
that closed with blank finality upon so many passings,
now?
Back far behind our public smiles,
in sanctuaries before sunrise,
unobserved,
still searching eyes,
once clear and young,
recall where old roads wind
though we walk here.

MAKING IT

Scared and Frightened
I Take Hold and Move Forward
Like a Child in Darkness
My Nerves are Right and Ready to Spring
But My Darkness is People
And the Strange Encounters
Are Those Things I Don't understand
I Do Reach Out for Help...
But Am Just Learning Where to Reach.

ORANGE SONG

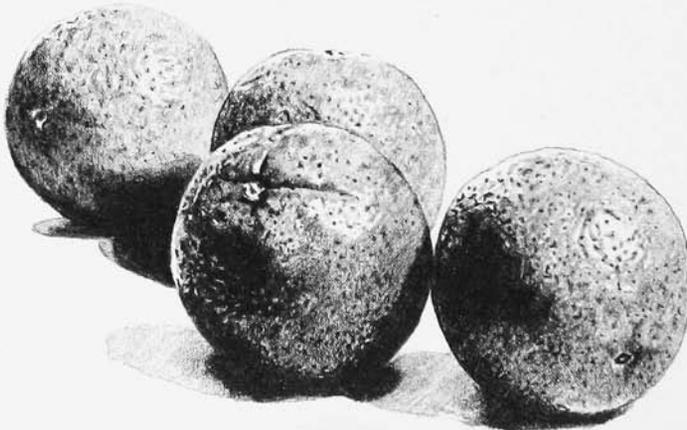
Have you ever been loved by an orange?
Have you ever been proposed to by a pear?
Had a banana bare its heart saying hurry up and start,
Please eat me and show you really care?

Has a cup ever asked you won't you wash me?
Or a book said please cover me with ink?
Or a song said once again won't you sing my last refrain?
Or a puzzle teased you let's see how you think?

Or a flower shyly opened as it felt the warmth of love?
Or the grass urged you excitedly to dance?
Or a bird sung of its life and introduced you to his wife?
Or a chocolate ice-cream melted at your glance?

Or a well shown you the depth of history's sorrow?
Or a stone said please hold me in your hand?
Please never let me go for we need you don't you know?
As the lily murmurs try and understand.

Listen to the breeze as it whispers in the trees,
Put your ear to the earth,
Behind the superficial signs of the confusion of our times,
These are the days of Man's rebirth.



THE PERFECT CHILD

No more will I down primrose paths wander,
As in days gone by,
But the track of the white trefoil I will follow,
Till the day I die.
Though the serpent tries to effect disguise,
At my three questions he will quiver and cower,
As he's reminded once again that he's very near the end,
When he'll be blinded in the morning's dawning hour.

As the pool round the trees becomes a lake
Of the clearest deepest blue,
The branches will change from brown to green,
And the bark will appear as new,
And the murmuring wind will rise and sing,
And the stars will dance on the water,
And a mighty shout will be heard all about,
From God's true sons and daughters.

And the black bloated raven will croak no more,
No more will he find he can fly,
He will beat his wings but the bones will be snapped,
And no more will he darken the sky.
Then the song of the birds will again be heard,
But their notes will be different than before,
For no sadness or sorrow will spoil their song,
And they'll sing for ever more.

And the pipes will play on that glorious day,
A-weaving a pattern of silk,
Their gentle notes will stroke the air,
And the skies will rain with milk.
The possessor will embrace the breath of life,
And the arrogant be made so meek and mild,
And everything will they freely bring
To the feet of the Perfect Child.

REPENTANCE

Words are not tears
and yet these words—
if they could dream—

would dream to be
tears beneath your
hands that touch

this page, flowing
toward you: Tears
of the mountain,

Tears of the sea,
Tears of the desert
night,

Tears of the
heart-stricken
day.

Words are not tears
and yet—
these are.

SUNSET

tenuous, almost breaking,
i put the words in
their place
with indrawn soul.
it is like, my friend, the
last frail line of
fire on the horizon
before the sun is
gone

FOR POLAND: DECEMBER 1981

Those are my brothers,
fighting on the edge;
the fires of ruin burning

all around
do not distill the
fire of their faith.

Those are my brothers:
setting their souls
against the final
sorrow.

It does no good to
tell them they will die.
They have already
shown themselves
to be
immortal.

LET THE WORD

let the word between us
go, unspoken;
let it break, soundless,

on the shore of your heart
in waves of hidden music
only perceived by love.

oh, God, there have
been many words: futile
and loveless in all ages.

let this one live
forever—
like the moon

come silently to rest
(like my heart within
Your Heart)

in the proud darkness.
with the long days of
wilderness behind us.

JANUARY SPRING

this is a january spring.
i believe in roots
that underground
are green. I believe
the same roots are in
my heart,
oh God, even though
the night is long-and
the world
does not cherish
dreams and even
though the leafless
trees stand crucified
against blank skies—
this winter i
will cry aloud
for love that
is
unchanging

NOCTURNE

i love the night
when it is quiet
and the moon seems
to be a friend who
cannot sleep.
in the night my
heart flowers
mysteriously
like stars
that suddenly appear.
like your tears
may appear
so unexpectedly
when your heart---
overflows

IS THE DREAM WITHIN

is the dream within
your own heart—is
the love you

feel is it
real, is it
what shines

from your eyes,
from your soul.
i want to know!

is it alive—
or something
you only

borrowed?

is the dream within
you?

for the dissidents

spring comes to your
prison cell and
weeps.

the courtyard opens
her heart to you,
insistently through
your sufferings.
there are many flowers
here whose color means

nothing to them
anymore—who have
forgotten

their own fragrance
because they see you
like this.

solicitous of you,
whose beauty cries
in such sweet

ineffectual rage?
while the rain
seems merely

never ceasing,
causing both leaves
and pain to grow.

PALM TREES

palm trees,
what is there about
you that hurts me
like a dream that
can't be remembered?
especially in moonlight,
waving by the waters,
you are sincerely
beautiful, so
unlike any other.
I say goodbye to you
again and again but
i can never leave you



NIGHT OF TEARS

night of tears,
most precious one,
more than the

stars you are
uplifting my
soul.

night of tears.

have you ever
cried because
the heart of God

shining in another
wounded you beyond
belief?

because, like Jacob,
you beheld the face
of God

in your brother?
it is not grief
that makes you

weep this night
of tears, but
love

BEAUTIFUL IS THE HEART

Beautiful is the heart
that does not alter;
that quietly bears the
wounds of changeless love.
Not in the heart of kings
or any power can
honor like your honor
be revealed. I would
sell all I have that's
holy—to understand
the motive of your
grace. I would
sell all of history,
and only, to
vindicate the
sorrow in your face.

TEAR

pure
tear of my Father's
you are shining

so much you blind
me to anything
but love—

pure tear.
from your shining
His heart knows

spring. Oh, pure
and stronger
than any word,

tear of my Father,
you will change
the world

TRIBULATION

In this time of winter which
the world calls spring,
I see your sorrow has an

endless name. and
your heartache is the
garden of their ignorance.

Here: where their sun only
blinds your eyes with tears—
and the sky, so softly blue
is a closed door.

Oh, Father, though the sky
is bright, how can I
see it anymore?

Frost lies at the heart—
And there is no spring.
Until all hearts can
bloom for You

Prayer Room

In this room, the quietest of the house
as if noise knows it should not enter here:
in this quiet room, the lamp alight,
the curtains crisp and still, a single rose
in a cut glass vase, the ceiling a white sky
softly glowing, the carpet clear, and smooth,
a fine light cushion the color
of a winter's layer of sand: in this quiet room
we kneel side by side, you and I, friends,
as brother and sister, eyes closed. I feel so warm
as you speak for both of us. I feel so warm
I want to say I love you,
the words echoing inside me, I love you,
the only words I have for this moment
the only words I can think of for you
and for that one to whom we address
our quiet songs and whisperings here.

These clouds
which are
they are
mine
their whiteness
moon-glow-bright light
and untouchable softness
all mine

in the sky
against the sky
on it and in it
alone and one by one
these clouds which are
are they not
of me
clouds aloof
unmoving
unchanging
to quick eyes
but today
now
at least for now
these highest-up clouds
are mine

Summer's leaving

Walking along the road at night, watching
the moon as it follows, dodging the trees,
nestled in the sky, I wonder at the wind
already cool, already damp, almost
tasting winter at the back of my tongue—
is it already the summer's leaving,
the end of days dreaming, no more falling
falling asleep in the long deep green-grass
within the certain embrace of the sun?

1533 No. Third Street, Harrisburg

That this little brick-front building,
the remnant of a row, now sinking into its lot
of glass-bedded burdocks and frost-bitten weeds,
that its two tiny storeys still stand,
lonesome, the scars on the lee side
the touchprints of those once-close neighbors
now gone: and that someone cut the hedges
along the narrow concrete walk
and laid the square of light green carpet
on the doorstep, and hung yellow curtains
behind the four-paned windows
and pulled down just one dark green shade
and left the storm door open
for the winter wind to play with.

Flags at city hall, Philadelphia

Flag silk popping in the wind,
glistening, wind-tightened rustle,
bubble billowings of air. Flag colors,
the land of the primary: dark blue,
royal blue, red pure, white, yellow.
The sun is setting and all the time lost today
now laughs round and round into our ears.
Wind, air, blow, air that I love, light blue sky,
the day rolling over and over again,
days like flags rolling in the air,
we watch, fascinated by the colors,
blue and red, the simple and glorious colors
of our inheritance.



Though in the end we are alone

“Close your eyes”
and in the dark you sing lullabies
sweet low songs of caressing comfort
as if you are taking me up, those strong arms
and putting me to sleep
at last beyond all cares of waking.
You put your coat over me
and tuck the sleeves round for pillows
and the bus goes on and on into night
and it all does not matter
except that you are here, by my side,
sometimes watching, sometimes thinking,
sometimes sleeping your own dreams.
I have never heard these songs before
sung in this way, sung in a voice
laying down the layers, one by one,
of time of growing together.
You could not leave, for though
in the end we are alone,
every time I close my eyes
I will expect the new softness inside
that makes me nest my head on whatever can be found
and know that I am safe.

In my quieted voice

In my quieted voice, the rare one,
I say nothing to you, just syllables,
because if it were in me to take your hand,
I would, or reach all the way up
and touch your shoulder, I would,
or pretend I were a close friend
and sit with you in the living room
as the morning light changes, I would,
or walk with you along the river, I would,
still saying nothing, but simply wanting
to be there in the quiet of your pain.
In my quieted voice I say nothing,
just wanting to glimpse your eyes,
to hear your voice, and for you to know
that if it matters, I am here
even though I can say nothing.

Process

In these silent days
a certain circumscription comes
like a slow comet leaving its tail in the sky
to divide and to divide
this from that as we watch

and all these words we write are descriptive
they are as solid as stones placed in a circle
at the first frosting of the ground
and so indeed they shall stay

but that thin ribbon's dividing makes us anxious
for when we will learn to speak them
one to another, getting beyond
the nightshining glitter
of the separation

Sounding lines

Are those brown eyes flat
will they show me back the one I am,
quiet pools, perfect mirrors
into which you invite me to look?
or will they curve to make circuses,
crawling sprawling distortions,
or pull to a point so tiny I am lost
in that clear serene brown?
will they be honest, harsh when they must be,
kind when they can? are they soft
or will they always be there,
dark sounding lines,
the cutting edge of the one I call you?

Pat: pouring water

Like silent nuns wrapped in their pure cloths,
their eyes the point at which we may enter,
at which we may meet the quiet women:
their hands moving noiselessly
amongst the cups on the dinner-table,
endlessly sorting, endlessly placing, endlessly making
the distinctions of their sensibilities:

Pat, you will always be there, often unseen,
arranging the flowers and filling the glasses
and touching the forks into place.
Yet in your deliberate ordering,
in the bow of your head, there is
unbearable stillness. How can I shatter,
how deny you your delicate balances?
but I have done it again and again
in the coarseness of stubborn refusal.

For we are alike, and see one another
in that recognition. Our conflicts
of means and ends breaks through
that pulled line of sympathy we share.
Your gentle lead toward what you know,
what you have found, your actions begun
in your careful, constant matching of them
with who you are: these things
you try to give, are yours to give,
yet I cannot easily come, simply come,
with you on this way that is yours.

You look up. I know you are there.
Your eyes - do you not know it,
but you must - pull and call across the room:
across the room: Come. Come here.
But I cannot. I am busy, too.
I am writing, don't you see?
And you do. A darkness seems to fly
through your eyes. I am not coming.
Your hands still move endlessly,
your back is curved. I know you sigh,
a soft tuck of breath. Please,
believe me, I am there with you, Pat,
by your side and sharing your impulse.

FORSYTHIA

Ah...forsythia
I wonder
if the human spirit
will ever dare awaken
as did you
from your sleep
and hidden days.

I wandered lonely as the Empire State Building

New York awash with people
Waves of the world's wise,
Proud, humble & searchers of freedom—

Corrupt or honest
they love liberty

Can't be conned
into greyness

Plant their gardens
full of marigolds
Their windows green-leafed,

Their nature reaches the darkest
corners—

Fierce and passionate, the New
Yorker, don't fence him in.

Here we are:—
Every face to see
Black, white, wide,
Narrow, yellow, and was
That green, she wore
With bright red feathers?

Yes on the streets
Every fashion, shape & form,
Modelled human face
Clay & putty could not make
Alone.

Walk, stroll, hustle, glide
Bump, this great tide
From waterfront to waterfront.

Deep Down the Corridors of Love

Deep down the corridors of love
The canticles are calling, strings
Pulling us up, up and away.....

To, reds, browns, orange,
Bright light green tops,

Fall colours on distant hills
The few white skeletal figures,
Bare trees of snows to come...

The ever-ever green, unchanging
Favourite fir,

God's colour and nature steals
Our hearts away and we place it
All at the center of singing.

Those lusty voices in the chill air,
Tree alight with bright and oh a
Star, the guide from so far, to
Show that love so near and
Dear in our hearts, now
Dormant as a winter's
Day, will be spring-
Yellow, the crocus-
Colour of
Rebirth.

**Metaphysics on Exhibit
(Now You See Them, Now You Don't)**

Art exposed to the light,
Love of truth and life, almost
Springsongs celebrating
Infinite worlds....

We see calm-lilied ponds, blown
Cypresses and cool winds on
Hot-flowered beds.

Moving the eye on to carved relief,
Teak faces, whirling grain, wrapping
Smooth figures in magic embrace

Then, leaping, fleeting forms in
Cool white, warm light, organic
Shoals traverse blue waters, whilst

Wax glows in ancient method,
Flowing on profile and
Allegoric story.....

Whirling on picture to picture
Keeps us,
Bemystified, enrapt....

This then, our grasp at ethereal straws,
Beauty and the beholden, equalling
Joy in You.

What do you write

What do you write
when your heart flies faster than the pen
across the page,
when you remember the gallop of hooves
smashed into wet sand—
Pounding surf and wet, salt taste in your mouth
and every cell bursts.
That feeling from so long ago
that I can't write down
because
the pen doesn't paint the scene I saw then.

One eye gazing into one eye
that no-one looked through
till today.
The essence of my being rushes
through that eye
to my love -
and then a watering - a gathering
a tear falls silently.
This I have tried so often to put into print.

The way - on long afternoons - that the
tiger lily is ferocious and sweet
the black and the orange growing
from green,
and the curve - the curve of the flower.
So precious.
One hour spent, just wondering how God
made this thing
this beauty
that my words could not express.

RUN RIVER

River run, run
river
faster and swifter,
tree trunk and leaf-branch
past they go,
white water beginning its
swirling and churning
storm-flood of river run
riot gone wild.
Round the bend smashing, crashing
and dancing
the last of the big tree
comes speeding and splashing.
Under the bridge I'm standing
wet with the river
that flows from the grey sky,
and joins with the grey ground
that flows with the river
run, run river
faster and
swifter.



ANGELA EISEN BART 88

MORNING

I wake to the sound of
violins, God
a glad
rising, a
concerto
of promises.
Though my body slumps
tired, mouth too slack
with sleep
to sing, my breath
quickens, flowing
cool
and sweet
like mountain
air.
I drink
melodies
like wine, bubbling
with peace.

WARRIORS OF THE SUN

Dragon's teeth,
we are sown
in the hardened earth,
spring
from a womb of stone
to taste the bitter air,
our armor silver streaks
against the sky.

We were called,
taught to carry
our homes upon our backs,
to fight,
warriors risen in the sun.
We do not run
from nightfall
or feeble weapons.
The enemy's tinny shouts
echo
thru the muffling wall of dust
shaken from our urgent feet.

We march
always forward,
thru distant fields of flowers,
a bright patchwork
above the graves
of millions
who have died in fear,
never knowing
we would come.

BROTHER OF MY FRIEND: VERSION I
To Robert, who persecuted Moonies, the summer of 1981

I call for your brother,
my friend,
but it is your voice
I reach.
“He is not home,” you say
coldly
to me,
interloper,
despoiler of innocent, unthinking
minds.
You throw your anger at me,
and I catch it
like a shiny brass plate.
Slack and cynical stares
are reflected
in its depths.
You are fourteen.
You exist in the vacuum of youth.
History is
dusty books.
Opinions, dull
with repetition,
are blared out
in your confidence
of originality.
But my love for your brother
lives
in you.
The same lineage,
the same promise
of greatness, whisper
of sentimental
tenderness,
resonates
in you.

I leap out of the box
you have crammed me in,
seize the hammer
from your hand,
make you spit out nails
one by one.
I want you huge, long
to see you
balloon out
with unanswered
questions.
I shove you headlong
into the next seven
years, pell mell
into a manhood
that will break down
doors, thrust its way
through walking
dead.
I don't fear your
hate.
It may shock you
to life.

The tickle of new ideas
taunts you—tempted,
you talk and talk
to the one
you need to hate.
Your plan of a few hurled
accusations
and a neat
slam of the phone, simmers
to an unexpected challenge
to think.
Without mercy,
I rip across the promises
no one will ever be able
to keep,
offer you one chance
to reach out
for a dream.

TO BE YOUR SISTER

To be your sister
means
I carry you
in my blood, my
bones
have the same hardness
as yours, my step
resilient
with the promise
of joy
that rises to a
shout
in you.

SANDWICHES

I remember sandwiches
eagerly devoured
saddle oxfords
sticking out
arrows pointing
to my grandmother's knees.
I loved to eat
at the red booths
on the mezzanine,
chewing as I watched
the colored balls
of shoppers' heads
smoothly juggled
by the ceaseless escalator.
Grandma ate
the blue plate special
teasing olives
into my puckered mouth.
But I wanted roast beef on
rye.
At home we ate Wonder Bread.
Funny that
20 year old sandwiches
can still smell so
fresh.

RETURNING RESURRECTION

I lose you
in the groaning mountains,
following your footsteps
on mountain trails
till days and months
become years
rain soaked
with your tears.
The echo of your voice
rides like thunder,
above the lighting luminous
plain.
Bellows of rage,
animal pain,
echo
echo
on the tail of the wind
call me
back
to the city.

A child is growing there,
tears cold
on her pillow.
I want to be with her
in the panting
of night,
sing songs
that resonate her dreams
like the distant trill
of a nightingale
at sunset.
I never want to see
that soft baby hand
stiffen
into a fist....

I will
slide down streets
on a midnight breeze,
surround her
with a mother's breath
warmer than the arms
I do not have
to hold her.

This child is tomorrow
a woman.
Our lineage shudders
to meet her.
Let me be there.

REMEMBERING JUNE

I was given your picture
today.
Your image leaped at me,
too vivid and three dimensional
to be mere memory.
You were so eternal
in June,
walking, talking, breathing in
the sharp wind
of huge vistas.
In the merging river
of our minds,
you came awake
with a sudden icy plunge
into reality.
You discovered a world
outside dormitory walls, books
and slide rules. There are
people
on the other side of the world
(no longer a plastic globe to you).
They sweat, cry, starve,
lie in sickness, and worry
about the survival
of their children, while you,
in rosy cheeked health,
read about them,
interesting
statistics.

You cried tears
in June, rocked
in my arms,
remembered
what it means
to be a child.
Six months later,
two thousand miles away,
your voice stretches, taut,
across a thin wire.
You are alone
and safe, determined
never to feel pain.
My voice haunts you
with possibilities
you want
to forget.

FINDING A FRIEND

Your laughter is soft,
free of the barbs
that rankle
from past accusers.
Face to face,
hard,
head on,
giving, giving, giving
you
more guts,
I can't stop
speaking
and you let me
rush on.
I hurl
a million thoughts
borne in the busy silence
above greasy dishpans,
within the surge
of city streets,
words tumbling
in a shiver
of release.

I am terrified
when you tease me,
yet I
leap into the teeth of it,
ripping open wider
my secret chambers,
tell you—me—
why I must speak.
You receive.
Your acceptance
is a breath-warmed mirror
allowing me to see
the first-time calming
of the frantic child
looking for a large warm hand
that comforts,
allows an insistent tug
to pull a laughing face
down
cheek to cheek
to answer the endless, endless
whys?



ANGELA
BISCARDI '89

DIDN'T YOU SAY YOU WERE ITALIAN, TOO?

I am not
afraid of you
now.
Your fierceness
is mine. Your eyes
burn
like my father's, when he
speaks
passionately
about the war,
or the relative value
of Wonder Bread.
We are
screamers,
you and me
(though you may not know it,
my silence, homage,
to your greater
intensity).
On the other side of your anger,
is laughter,
and tears. Like a
child,
you slide
between emotions, ray of light
slicing through
clouds,
shimmering
the rain.

FINDING THE WAY HOME

It is clear I will have to
fight
through the suffocating fog
around you, waving
my dented lantern,
screaming
your name.
Why do you continually
run away,
into the pulsing
night?
People lie
in dark shadows, dank
against slimy
walls, wait
to throw
darkness,
snuffing out
your light.
Every time I
get close to you, phantoms,
stinking
with terror, rise
cringing
before your eyes,
whispering words
that drop like
scales, blinding
your vision.
Who do you see
when you look at me?
What do you hear
when I speak?

Do I glare before you,
monstrous, lethal,
with devouring
teeth?
Do I stand between you
and God?

I sing a song to you,
in a thin child's voice,
needing no wire
to travel
3000 miles
to your ear.
My dreams
open all doors
between us.
I hear the echoes
in your mind, cry tears
to see you
at the edge
of a crumbling
cliff.
You have always been a
god
to me, even when you
stood by the gutter,
wailing,
like a beggar
child.

You were a prince
in tattered
clothing, in search
of his lost
kingdom.
To the world,
you were a slave,
unworthy
of attention.
I plucked you, like a
rose,
from a steaming
dung heap,
nurtured you
with clear water
and light, presented you
proudly,
in a golden
vase,
to grace the altar
of heaven.

RUNNING

Over the bridge
I walked you,
down to the road, so
young, so very
bright, your step
springing
with life.
A kiss, you said,
means everything, love,
a greeting,
from the heart of
peace, secret
within you.
You kiss my mouth
like a careless
baby, turn,
jogging down the road, dappled
by tree shadows, shrinking
smaller and smaller,
disappearing
into the phantom
world,
beyond a jagged
bend
of highway.

Where are you going, my
son? You were
mine, for just
two days.
Did you know
I would have
died
for you?
To see that shining
light
doused
in the murky
half world
you slowly
sink
into....

I wanted to steal you
away,
run with you,
desperate mother, clutching
child, wrapped in
makeshift
rags, fleeing
from the murdering
swords
of rampaging
soldiers.
In the name of
love,
your brother has
killed you, bullied you
back
to the streets.
You will sell your body
today,
tomorrow—how many more
times?

to satisfy the tearing
lusts
of aging men, till
that bright spirit
is tarnished
with the rust
of their years of
insatiable,
stealing
need.

I would have died for you, my
baby.
I wanted to
give you my
life, raise you
as tenderly
as a hothouse
flower, ever so gently
watered, fed,
exposed, step by
step,
to the full strength
of light.

ADMISSION TO THE TEMPLE

Little ignorant girl,
you scolded me.
So tired, eyes raw
with tears, I
hear your voice
screaming
far in the distance.
Lately, your arrows
seem always
to be shot
when the bullseye, my
heart,
is already
pierced.
Your missiles
slice through
a ready made
hole,
whistling
on air.

Who am I connected to?
you ask.
Who is a parent
to me?
My Father, my
Mother, are a small framed
picture
I cry over, clutched to my
breast, rocking,
rocking,
cross-legged
on the floor, till the tearing
sobs
quiet
to somnambulent
peace.

My Father speaks of
forgiveness,
compassion, love
without fear.
Around me there is so much
pain.
Across three thousand
miles, across one
city, whenever I pick up
the phone, someone is crying
in pain, unable to bear
another moment
without God, yet unable to
believe
that even we
could find
home.
I want to confide
in you, but how can I let you
stride
into my inner
temple
with careless
muddy boots?
I have voluntarily
smashed
every idol
one by
one, sweeping the debris
briskly
out my door,
scrubbing the stone floor
raw white
with my tears.

Still I am
afraid, to the point of crippled
terror, my offerings will
not be
received.

Around me the pain
rises
to a sucking
crescendo.
I listen, listen,
till my whole body
aches. I want to
scream and
run, yet I
sit, drawing in more
pain.
The four walls of my
room
become an echoing
cavern, cries of children
dying, purpose
unknown, shudder
through time.

I stand before a tall
white door, staring
at a handle
I cannot reach or
turn.
The muddy red of my
blood
stains
the pristine
stairs.
Voices sing, impossibly
high, dense with
sweetness, forcing
the surrender of
fear.
I stand
exposed, carrying my
crime, like a burning
brand.

I cannot put it
down.
Hot oozing pitch
relentlessly
drips,
scorching
my clinging fingers.

Who will open the door that
leads
to a new world?
It seems I have waited
on a desolate
cloud
eons, without hope for the
passage of
time,
to know the warm rising
Sun, dissolving all
greyness, air moist
with evaporated
tears.
Now,
back warmed
in the expanding
light, I straighten,
inch by inch, with renewed
height, released from the burden of
night.
Lifted on the
backs
of milleniums,
those who suffered and
died
to bring a moment
they would never
reap, I reach
for your extended
hand, cling, am
pulled from a lineage of
fear, blood washed
clear
as new rain.

BLACK AND WHITE

I hold my hand to yours,
palm to palm, both of our
fingers stretch
long, lean,
tapered, soft hands,
women.
If I turn your palm
face up,
the lines there
will speak to me
about your life,
a miniature
road map.
I can know your struggles, your
heart pain,
the way you think, the probable
length
of your life.
In so many ways,
we are the
same, our height,
our basic body
shape, and the straightforward way
we have plowed
into life.
I take these same two hands,
alike in size,
beauty, and
life predictions,
turn them over
again, back side
up.

There is a difference
here,
your skin a rich, dark
hue, mine,
pale ivory.
This brown-
ness
is mirrored
in your eyes.
As I look into the
scintillating light
of tears,
I wonder why
my eyes
are blue.
Brown is the color of
true love, and
underneath both our
thin layers of
skin, beat
hearts, rich and red
with life
blood, pulses that
quicken
to the command
of our dreams.

OH, JERUSALEM!

Your voice calls.
Thru a green haze
I stumble to meet you,
forgetting beggar's bowl
and bloody, wounded feet.
Your face emerges,
a reborn, eclipsed sun.
I stumble
caught
by warm, calloused hands,
your voice a caress.

How I need you—
embrace that heals
all the empty dark nights
when I cried and cried,
longed to end this life
leading to nothing,
never begun.
I am ashamed
to stand before you,
torn
by the jagged shards
of my dreams.
Your eyes,
red and coal bright, burn
with sleeplessness and tears;
your back,
young and hard, bends
like a storm-tossed sapling
under the weight
of our broken lives.

“Take me with you!”
I cry,
and you let me follow,
one of the dirty, the poor,
in a ragged trail behind you.
I understand few of your words.
I only know
they make my body tingle.

How can you give
and give
when you have nothing,
except the rough familiar robe
you wear?
Thousands of homeless children,
fishermen, laborers,
beggars, whores,
follow the beckoning wing
of your love,
drinking life
from every tear.

You speak of Father God,
and I try to put a face
on a dark universe,
an empty vastness of stars.
There was a pain and madness in me
I could never face
until the fire of your life
ignited centuries
of choked undergrowth
allowing quickened seed
to be sown.

To all My Little Brothers

Once I have come to know
your pain,
I cannot forget.
Forever I shall be searching
for your happiness.
My heart cries to see
your face of darkness.
But in those moments
when the light comes forth
from the God being born within you,
You are more beautiful than
a million songs.
In that tiny moment
a hope is born
for your eternal life,
and the Mother-God within me
longs for the day
when you will greet your Father
man to man.

Sunshower

No words
just the sound
of raindrops
mingling
with my tears.
Overflowing the living chalice
with their kiss
so springs forth
a floral
aurora borealis
in the renewal dance
of the years
While winging song
from every bower
'fore dawn's first light
'til twilight hour
lilt whistling wind
soft...nestle in
these arms of trees
and rock the cradle
by breath of breeze.
Who can but sigh
in wonder
of cherry blossom sky
Even' thus come
moon star and planet night
to cartwheel before
each loving eye

THE END

the end
just ahead
they said
the road has to end
no one lives forever
now my time is here
will everything just stop?

and I put out
so much effort
beating back the bushes
stealing past the stalks
brushing past the branches.

now it has to end.

this path was rough
but at least passable
possible
but a few yards ahead
a stone wall
no more road at all.

but now I see
running to the right
a wedge cut through the weeds
it grows into a wider trail
then hops onto
the highway.

of course
I should have known
the end
is just a bend.

With the first slip of my pen

In the shadow of the day, I saw a world which I once knew,
slip away
into something my eyes could not focus on.

A world which gave me football boots,
a stamp collection and a fishing rod,
a windy country lane,
and faith.

I saw it crumble behind me,
out of control
in a realm where freedom couldn't penetrate,
something that a pure soul could never recognize or relate to.
Maybe I'd grown up all of a sudden,
awoken out of a dream,
or just never taken a clear look.
Or did it take such a long time to realise,
that a nation whose spirit was strong,
where the grass was always greener,
had fallen slowly into a crevasse
of fabricated scenes, neon lights and aching hearts
empty, hollow and weeping,
dark shadows below the eyes and shoulders always with
invisible loads?
I hadn't just woken, it wasn't a dream.
It began the first day of the slip of my pen,
when the praying ceased,
and the smashed window in the church over the street was
never fixed.

POEM

Yes, forget.
Let those years settle.
Rejoice and catch the fruit
as it falls from the tree
into the palms of tiny hands,
Smooth, silky deserts of innocence.

Be at ease
and recite the words of love
given on the day you wrote them.

This is your land.
And these faces around you are yours.
And the feeling that is with you now
is like gliding through the corals
of a south sea island,
knowing that when you reach the shore
a million smiles of warmth
will dry and clothe your spirit,
And gently sing with you.

It is all yours.
There is nowhere it can be lost.
For the garden that you stand in
has no ending
and begins with every day you rise.

poverty,

like something you could have been
but never were,
never realized
like unrisen dough,
an un-hammered nail.
you lay waiting,
confused
wondering why you existed
as lichen does on a rock,
or the bristle-cone pine,
disfiguringly living endlessly
on its nothingness.

like a friend dying,
your poverty is a fact,
acceptable,
because it's there
the tide gone out,
the useless aeroplane,
decorating the roof of the museum.

The Great Deceiver

So, once again you come
And stare me in the eyes
While blocking my way
And darkening the sky before me.

Once again, you dance
On gypsy wheels and veils
Dance for whom and what?
I know
So I need never ask.
I need never invite you
For you arrive without my beckoning
And dance
You dance
Though soon you will tire.
Soon, when you see
I'm no longer amazed
Nor am held by hellish spells

So soon you will tire
Grow weary and leave
To dance for others
But no more for me

On that soon coming day
No more
No more for me

Little by Little

Little by little
God blesses his children
Little by little
He brings them all home

One by one
They come in before Him
And all at once
Their sadness is gone

Little by little
He gives them their freedom
Little by little
He makes them His own.

COMING OUT OF THE ICE
for Victor Herman, Donna and God

bleak, barren tundra
wind whipped, frozen waste
the cry of a homeless wolf

the forest, siberian, silent, indifferent
birds freeze, plummet, rocks explode

Victor Lloyd!
I said "Victor Lloyd!"
can you hear me?
it's time to come out
winter has had its day

SCREAM! yes, it's OK
louder, Louder, no one minds
 I understand, I too have been locked in the ice
yes it's painful, unbearably so
 but that's to be expected, normal
you are thawing out
your blood warms, agonizes into your limbs
 slowly, slowly the feeling returns
you forgot that your legs can move, your heart beat
 didn't you?

now feel her hand touch yours
 human, hot, unreal
he hesitates, is it a dream?
don't be a fool, take it
touch it, squeeze it
 you are ALIVE
laugh, laugh you idiot
 you know how
forget, forget the ice age
 look into her eyes
 there winter whimpers, a joke, a fossil
melt, in her smile
 it's for you
dance, dance you dummy
 swing her through the air
smell, smell springtime
 in her hair

NEW CITY

At some point, one day stops.
The next day begins.
Climbing on the bus, felt that new-day excitement.
The driver is a professional
with 360 degree vision.
He knows every car behind,
ahead or beside him.
Decide that I can probably trust him.
But whether he will take to a calm place
or a war zone
Can't say.
Just know, when I get off this bus
and look out at those strange,
concrete slabs,
Can't go back.
Going to kick that door open and suck
a big breath of new city.
Then, like a motorcycle gang
cruising into town,
Going to rev the engine and
shake windows and send dogs
running for cover.
Ready for a city that spits.
Ready for a city that kicks
and this time going to shut up.
Because words are a cruel switchblade
in an amateur's blood-stained hands.
Might be headed for a hungry city
with big shark teeth.
But driver is taking there
and he's a professional.
By God I trust Him.

Edge of Spring

Edge of spring,
spring without right
to be
born in shadows left of the sun,
dark mind animating yellow beams
that drench the earth,
rotting with decay
of ideas gone bad;

Spring, lying
against the gleaming, crystal cold
of winter light
emitting truth,
against the steel-edged days
which no soft, golden fruit
of ancient poison stains
with sweetness of deceit;

Eager spring,
come too soon,
the buds of winter
rest yet,
sheathed in searing purity.

Who would believe the spring held death,
while winter tempest ravaged clean
the white bosom of life,
heart-wrought revolution
of the world,
now to bear
the violent season
of the just,
now to tear
apart
the chthonic root
wrenched up
by one
swift turn and thaw
of a spinning Heart.

New day,
spring of old
is born a victim
to your final rite,
soon to be
seized—
in holy sacrifice.



Zen Stone
Into the Silences

I enter bowing and kneel in the dimness
reverberating with incense and bronze,
settle myself, a bird come to nest,
while outside rain patters on the flags
and I within sink as a stone—

a fluttering stone sinking beneath,
sinking down into, like a gnarled leaf,
a dried leaf on the evenings breeze,
into the ever deeper, ever heavier waters,
salt waters of life in the seas of the heart,
the waters of the heart poured from between the eyes.
a fluttering stone in silver flashes sinks
past fishes and sea creatures in the night,
in the night of the depths into the heaviness
to the bottom of the heart,
to that core from which the waters rise,
ever deeper into the flowing spring.
at the core of the waters,
within the heart like sleep,
like sleep in the shadows of starless night,
there in the shadows an incandescence
sinks to bring light, sinking as a stone
fluttering into the deep places, into the waters,
a bathysphere of sight, a silver
sliver of stone dropped from the heights
to sink into the dark places, into the waters
of the soul.

Invitation

castles of words
one on the other
intersected in curved lines
each an echoe and an image
in the builder's mind
strung out to reach the limit of capacity
raftered in carven sentences
buttressed with cunning tenses
inhabited by a spectre
armed with a warrior's lance
hoping to reach your heart
and sever your brain
inviting you to dance

To Get a Dream

I go to watch the sun set and the river flow
to get me a dream before the flowers are blown,
before the stream of my days be flown
into the ways of darkness and night long drawn
out beyond sight where the sun sets and the river flows.

I go to watch the birds fly and the leaves fall
to get me some sky beyond the clouds and walls
shrouding the days of joy and the green tall
trees of hope and peace; tearing with wheels
and bearing away the birds flying and the leaves as they fall.

I go to catch the light in the river's face
to get me a life of stars that dance their race
glancingly in sets of love and crystal lace
through the mist all woven into an elven peace
of olden light caught in the nets of the river's face.

I go to watch the sun set and the river flow
to get me a dream.

The Passing of Lao Tzu

wind from the silences
gone into the silences
beyond the western wall
across the desert wastes
and five thousand words
brushed as the watchman's gift

water drops echoing dimly
in the uncarven watchroom
and a thrush's rustling song
flutters like the brush birdlike
in the master's hand

sunset's light infuses
their shared eyes
and a shared twilight meal
steams between them

in the morning gone
with footprints light
across the wilderness of dew

yesterday, snow fell
and each branch and twig
lifted itself under gentle weight
while the air remained clear between
the scattered crystals
icy on my face and hands

today, riding the trains
i watched the swaying cars
amid the clatter and noise of rush hour
the people swaying to the movement
as rushes in winter at a frozen pond's edge
in faces i traced the curves and forms
of noses and eyes, cheeks and mouths
the loops and curls of warm hair
flowing or knotted, bobbed or braided
and the colors of skin
from deepest teak to pale ivories

the air
clear and bright
a candle burning within me
icy on my face and hands

Waiting

I stand waiting on the platform
among the usual people on a usual day
and catch you in my eyes
see your smile, though you are gone
hear your voice in the silence
your gentle breathing in the calm
behind all the rattling of the trains.
When will I see you to hold you?
When reach out to touch your face?
I shoehorn myself into the train
thinking of you
and glad that I have known you
go on one more day,
waiting.

Nightbird

I sit rocking on the porch
long after the evening meal is done,
smelling the damp wood
and listening in the darkness:
the song of a bird
sweet and light flickers
from the field across the way,
a melody of reedy notes oboe-like
from the heart of the rain dampened night,
and I sit breathing with its song,
with the rain, with the night,
feeling the weeping sky,
feeling the wet grasses, the wet earth,
feeling the warm feathers
and the small soft heart
beating behind the song.
My skin soaks up the music of the night
as the earth soaks up the rain
till it flows within me
to water my heart's roots
and fill the springs within.

lone crow befogged in the distance,
morning sermon here in the warm room,
and what fills the infinite space between?
that space filled with walls and trees, air and mist.
what fills that space between, echoing?
filled but empty, propped up with end points
of voices crying in the mist or in the wilderness,
myriad endpoints, each a voice calling,
each propping up the silence in its echoing
like the light growing greyly in the trees,
fingers reaching up in the echoing emptiness,
endpoints of vision, the preacher and the tree
calling out with light and glistening with song,
that gleaming space echoing between,
filled with God.

Forest Sorrow

your love the home place
the soft and peaceful place
in the forest untamed
in the wildness bare
and empty
your love enough
your love more than castles
or kingdoms
here by the waters in spring
where my dusty heart longs
to drink, longs to swim.
But, castles beckon
and a kingdom calls for me
a kingdom i cannot remember
nor imagine
while desert paths lie before me
to burn again these blistered feet
to paint this heart again
with dust

Sad Songs

why the sad songs always
piercing with tears
to the aching below,
the suffering like starved rats
taken to gnawing steel?
war songs crying
like fire in the sky
or the echoe of my dying
father's despair hung in the air—
ghettoes of the heart
where strangers live alone
each his own ghetto
each a gulag in Siberian winter
with mea culpa barbed wire
and fretful machine guns
ringing the heart's work camp
while frosted fingers ungloved
freeze in the labor of timber cutting
a lifetime sentence of wondering
where sad songs always
tie the pierced with tears
together
in the aching below.

Smoking Storm

if the storm is howling
with words unclear
stop and hear
the song of the Jinn—
caught in a bottle
a message of few words
washed across the storm
buried in sand.
waiting across the years,
a Jinn of words,
for release and the master's bidding.
poor faded scratches,
ink on torn parchment
to go up smoking
in hands years hence.
fixed shape
of fluid meaning
to go up in fluid smoke,
the meaning lost
in doing the master's bidding.
the parchment unwrit
in your hands
years hence

smokey rays focused in the lense of this moment—
Byzantine glories and head hunter wisdom
in a crystal to shine in smokey light—
the wyrd sisters call MacBeth on
while Cleopatra fondles the asp at her breast
and Agamemnon lies butchered in his bath
the tragedies over and over played
one moment of sound and fury
soon blown away with the wind and sand
a Jinn of words waiting
for release and the master's bidding

searchlights probe the hovering clouds
caressed by wreathing smokes
and the flickering reds of burning London.
half around the world
the bleeding Yamato screams
into her sea bed grave
salt blood mingles with ocean tears
calling the sharks on—
antique syllables from before recorded time
writ on the parchment of a walking shadow
devouring as only sharks can

in hands years hence
a fixed shape of fluid meaning
goes up in smoke

and what of the Mongol hordes
or Stalin's wretched blood-stained hands?
what of the slave holds moaning
in diseased horror with fear smoking?
on and on, over and over played
the meaning lost in doing the master's bidding

hands years hence,
will your smoking Jinn lose meaning
from your manacled wrists
or burn into crystal and a song,
the master having fretted his hour upon the stage
and gone?

MFT-MIA

I saw my sister remove her hat and gloves—
a knight pulling off sweat-and-bloodied gauntlets
and setting aside the dented helm.

I have seen too, the vans rolling on—
knobbed and studded with gun turrets,
strong armoured in heavy plate.

* * *

Antietam creek writhed through fields choked and clotted with blood,
the smoke and groans rose through the sky—

I still see them, dropping like scythed wheat

brothers all, good soldiers all

and the terror of their cry, the horror

hangs yet in the air and weeps in the grasses and flowers—

full more than a hundred years gone that day—

their hearts caught in the moment's fear

deeply impressed in each clod of earth, each rock and stone.

* * *

How many have we lost in this war of ours,
where Antietam fields lie in hearts and minds
and battles are fought, invisible yet deadly?

We fight against princes and powers unseen
as if in a dream—

I have seen the courage of the midnight charge,
lightning in the dark,

delicate girls lugging heavy guns,

pale youths asleep on their feet from lack of sleep.

I've ridden through the dark hours before the dawn,

eyes at halfmast, and the drunken van weaving

like a crippled bomber flying home on a wing and a prayer.

How many have we lost?

brave soldiers all

their hearts shot away by the accuser's shell
or fragmented, trapped on the mine fields of despair.
How many would still be here if we'd heard their call?
Caught off guard, even heroes fall, their wounds unseen
as they stumble and drift, trailing in the dust and wreckage.
How many have we lost?

 Did you see them fall?
Weeping we go on and in the day of blessing weep,
missing those fallen on distant fields
 only a few know where or how,
but their place remains as an emptiness in the heart.
How many have we lost?

 brave soldiers all
 did you see them fall
 or hear them call?

and what of the disappearance
of those faces long into the distance
as the hardships mount
and confusion mounts into the sky,
and the air is sun and spring
colors in purple
and colors in green
flowers in a vase
before an open window
in the light of late summer sun
sloping into the past
tears shed one by one
on the slopes of the heart
little bleeding flowings in the bloody struggle
at these the beginning of days
a box with fur covered lid
and soft leathern hinges
clasped with a wooden pin
to hold feathers and tears
and other such sorrows in
against the day of days
hopes going on crutches
with blistered feet to bathe in Jordan
by the shores of the sea.

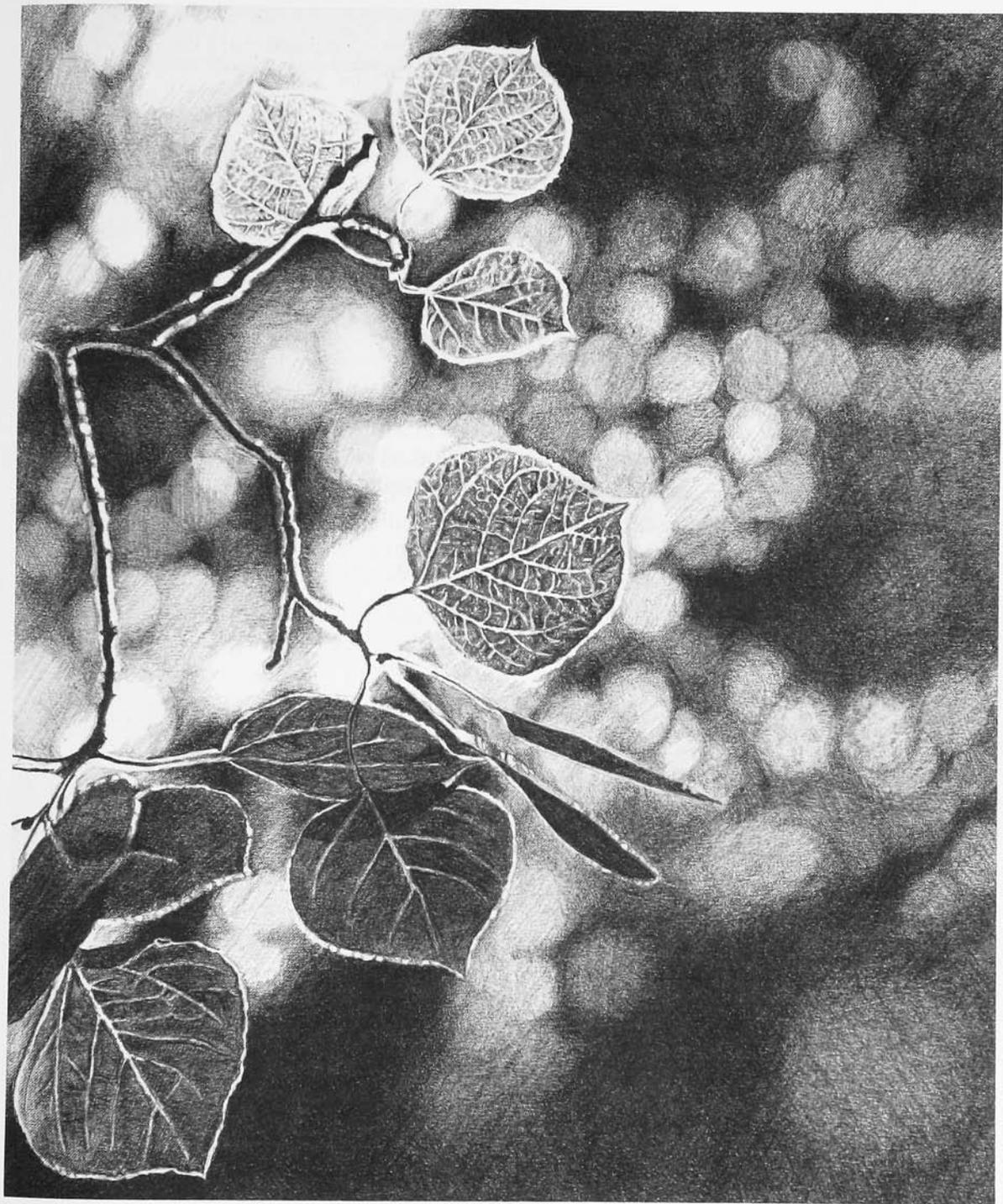
Mountain Storm

fingertips torn and raw
with scraped white knuckles slowly bleeding
my hand cramped into place
welded into place by blind stubbornness
all the world roars around me
and I toss suspended in a storm
fire and lava stirred with acid
in breakers of wind
dissolving all but my hand
no sight but confusion
no sound but all sound shrieking
nothing but an iron fist grasping
clinging at an unknown
barely remembered
stone support on the cliff's edge of madness
the iron more sure the less I know
the stone all I know

and now breathing again
as rage passes into calm
I wait
and prepare
to go on
to climb once more

Leaves of Meaning

rooted, the trees converse in hushed tones
urged on to excitement by the clouds rushing
ragged fleets before the sky's blue face.
blind old men, they stand by twos and ones,
reaching out in surging voices,
arguing meaning,
flowing song-like place to place,
and publish their findings in new leaves
added each year to winter's memories
in coded volumes red and gold.



colors of the sun
splashed against the rainbow snow
catch the feathered throat of winter
in bird-song morning
wherein are the bells of God
and the incense of His temple

Barnyard Moonrise

winter moonrise, cold in the northeast,
palest silver gold through windy bare trees,
and leaves, one or two, dry in the dusk,
embrace the ragged barn.

I shovel, frozen fingered, frozen horse dung and straw,
earth to earth in living decaying odors hovering
brown in the air momentarily, only to be torn
out across the horse trodden yard.

the wind, smelling raw copper and steel ingot cold
wrapped its arms around everything to pass on smiling
across the clouded face of the hammered iron moon.

left behind, I stand manure fork leaning,
glowing as a bright glede in the fire dreaming.

True...in the dark, too

and what if I find You in horse droppings too?
are You always in flowers seen by the few?
in the things of earth as well
I sense You in the natural smells
and in the rain as well as in stars
in the common and the near more than the far
in all You are true
bright bell in the dark, You!

between the books and my eyes
between shelf and ceiling, cup and wall
unnumbered spaces
like water filling the empty places
and somewhere
between eyes and there
I find just out of sight, you
an almost ghost.
I breathe you in the rain
almost see you through a window
in the pane of night
almost embrace you
as you slip between the waters falling
and smile to find you
breathing in my ears
kisses soft on my eyes
and gentle in my tears.

Such a yearning deep inside
I want to go
Go where the caravans of old have gone
Cross dusty deserts where
only the few have walked.
See minarets climbing to the blue
and hear the call to prayer
as the sun lifts its golden orb
ever so gently into the sky.

To smell sweet meats,
Tea and see
flocks of goats and sheep
in markets near the eastern sea.

Hot, hot days on the plains
and cool nights in
mountains girdled in pines
yet capped with snow;
Blue white in noon day light
and hidden in clouds come dusk.

We're wrapped warm against the night wind
Our faces glowing in the fire
Safe for now
and never wanting now to go

It does though
but journeys never really end
Dreams and hopes live on
and carry us into new days
New places to see, new ways to know
and on and on we go.

At last sitting on the sand
I know love and have love to give
like the oceans waves reaching up to me
and then running back to the sea.

A gentle wind tousles my hair
my loves soft touch for me
The sunset draws me on out
over the waves and glittering sea
and on into eternity.

The Mother of Nature

The Mother of Nature
inspires
the tiniest flower
to blossom.
And the growing thing
finds no way
to express
its thankful love
except
simply to be.

Wind soft sighs

Wind soft sighs
across the wet velvet brown
of rounded hills,
And the whispered winging
of a bird
dissolves in fluting.

Rain-dappled leaves
tap tap
their questions to the earth.
And mist
arises like thoughts
from the earth's wise counsel.

My dreams are as vibrant,
rushing, sparkling
as rivers.
My thoughts as rambling
tumbling, billowing
as clouds
in a breathing sky.

And you
are the warmth in my world.
Your sunlit soul
decries the chill
in gold-illuminated streaks
like gentle fingers
imperceptible warming
embracing
the earth and me.

My Question

Amidst clouded fantasies
I seek you
 racing through meadows
to find your eyes
 one burning question
 on my lips.

Will you let me
be a child
 forever?

 Unhesitating,
tenderly you answer
 Yes.

And now I know:
 not youth we seek
 but innocence
inviolable
 eternal purity
 of heart.

Father

My father
from your eyes the sun rises
and sets.
Your laughter rings out
like the laughter of the carp
leaping in morning frolic.
Your stomach is solid and
I wonder, while you are speaking,
if my arms would reach
all the way around...
You thrust your hands into your pockets
but your thumbs stick out
and reassure me.
I concentrate on changing the world and
other wonderful cosmic events.
I crinkle my brow in consternation but
in the next moment
my eyes fill with tears.
I am your daughter and, somehow,
I will take care of you,
my father.

accomplishment is value
when you're dead inside
but i want to live.
i want to throw away my medals and trophies.
i think faces are prettier; don't you?

the trees are so beautiful now.
why can't i paint what i see?
something's disconnected.

i have a secret for you:
there's an igloo in my middle!
i have another secret for you:
it's melting.

Reeling in the East

Oriental Scholarship
Oriental Thought
Like drunken butterflies
Designed without no landing gear
Batting against the startled
atmosphere
of Academia
Waiting for an opening
of mercy
to appear

Dragon White and Dragon Blue

Dragon White and Dragon Blue
Awesome presences endure
Beyond the Gates they lie.
Creative, surging power of fortune and destruction
Beyond the Gate they lie in wait
While we the vigil keep within and watch
The Oracle consulting.
The sign indicative of movement
Shadows deepen shadows deep
Dragon Blue is turning now
All men to Arms! Defend the Western Gate!
Hurry now the Dragon Tide is risen
Dragon Blue has claimed the whole horizon!

And in the lull
We count our blessings; those remaining
Until the next alarm.
Dragon White! Quick to the Gate
Shining fierce like morning on the sea
Glittering danger in the blinding light
Piercing all tranquility
Of those of us asleep in peace
Within the Eastern Gate.

Can Two Great Dragons lurk
Unbeknownst one to the other?
Would they not find their contest true
In challenging each another
Somewhere in The Great Beyond
Instead of here? Within the Gates
Fear awaits its rebirth into peace
White sky-patches sojourn to grey
then melt in drops or fall in frozen feathers.
As Dragon White transforms herself
Again to Dragon Blue by molting.

A TRIBUTE TO JOHN KENNEDY

I remember the day John Kennedy died.

Algebra class,

a secretary came in and said, "The President has been shot."

Mr. Shutes, our teacher, said,

"You will never forget this day."

"The radio says he is still alive,"

But *we knew* he was dead.

That 40 minutes until the bell rang, was the longest. Ever.

They say, in Vicksburg, Michigan, that if you took
a good canoe and paddled down the drainage ditch, to the creek, to the stream,
then after a few weeks you could reach the Gulf of Mexico, a thousand miles
away.

Well, that day it was so silent in my country

That you could have heard the sirens wailing for him in Dallas.

Two girls started to cry, then pulled their desks close together.

We all felt so guilty.

Like the time I left the kitten outside

And she was hit by a car.

Mr. Shutes said we could all just wait quietly for more news.

And then he turned away.

Methodically he filled two blackboards with new problems, saying,

"I'll just put these up here in case you'd like something to do."

I watched him march the numbers across in regimented rows.

Mr. Shutes had been a soldier in a war or two.

He had a way of walking, like in measures.

At doorways he would hesitate, angling ten degrees, turning on his heel,
and in this practiced way, his broad shoulders cleared the frame.

And even from behind I could see, he was so busy loving

that the chalky yellow rows remained straight

even though his eyes, like mine, weren't really focusing.

Now we shared this painful point in time.

Algebra calmed the trembling in his fingers, making him a study in dignity.

The first time I had become serious, I was ten.
Now my serious heart imploded once again.

Algebra, oh, Algebra.

A tangled load of problems on a balancing equation. Shifting left to right to left, until, each time a little mystery is extirpated,
Unknowns dissolving into knowns.

Reducing all the tangles into a variable—

Back and forth, forth and back. It seems

These problems were created by the crazy Greeks (who unbalanced all of
God's equations)

Just to give kids like me the shivers and the willies, even to imagine there would
be a shadowy trace of Algebra lurking
after highschool.

Oh, Algebra. Shifting till I'm seasick and I can't recall

Your logical orders. Somehow, maybe somebody should put all the world's tangle
of problems into a big equation, until they teeter-totter *enough* times,
till somebody could solve them.

"Ask not what your country can do for you..." he had said.

That evening was my brother's birthday. Mother made him
a cake, but I told her, "I don't think anybody will want to eat any."

But we decorated it anyway.

That night mom's best chocolate cake tasted like clay.

For three days the nation was in mourning. No one did or said anything more
than what was necessary.

Then we all attended the funeral on t.v. and saw how John-John saluted,
and we clipped his picture from the paper.

Somehow, we all said goodbye.

John Kennedy's blood cries from the ground, "...Ask what you can do for your
country."

And in that timeless

40 minutes, the tangled burden of history held by someone else; had,
somehow,

somehow shifted onto me.

I call and call
but there is no answer,
although you can hear me,
no response is your choice.
How can I give back to you
that which I took.
I will try and keep trying,
'til I no longer see
the sun in the east,
the star from the north,
brown leaves in October
or the blue of the sea.
Beyond my eternal rest
like an echo in emptiness,
as my heart is anxious
long awaiting
your release.

Why is it,
I do things I know I should not
Almost as though, I had forgot
 about the rules, the right and wrong.
Seems like its taking just too long.
 All this waiting
 Can't do what I want
 Anticipating
 the falling short
falling...short.
Almost, but never made it
 Nearly, but not enough
One more step, one more minute
 One more nothing!
Not later, Now! Do it Now!
Pick your face up off the floor,
turn the knob and open the door,
 There!
Its not so hard to start again;
Praise God! Praise God! Praise God!
 Amen!!!

Hard times, baby,
hard times;
Ain't got no food in the cupboard,
an' no money to buy more.
Gotta make use of whatever we got...
...which ain't a lot.
A few slices o' bread
gotta pain in my head
with no aspirin to be found,
end of the month comin' round.
Hard times, yes hard times.
—Can't 'ford no furniture
lay rugs for my bed,
a cardboard box is my dresser—
(Smack) that bug's dead!
Milk crates and cartons
to rest my behind,
our ripped paper curtains
are doing...just fine
—But I got me the truth, you see
ta help me carry on,
I'll become me a good man
before my days are gone.
Das right! These are hard times,
seems nothin's goin' right
but my souls bin filled
cause I seen the light
—So keep on, you hard times,
you ain't gettin' me down.
You see a smile in my heart.
Yes, I know where I'm bound.
...mmm, Hard times.

Theologers rage and
philosophists storm
about which second
the new life is formed.

But the soft and sleeping mind
wrapped up so close inside
has no shame to fear
or fire of hate to hide.

With brutal love conceived,
in desperation borne,
the dream of spring is crushed
the veil of trust is torn.

Nuts!

I fed a squirrel nuts today,
he ate right from my hand.
I asked him home to sup with me
and later hear a band.

He said "I'd like that very much
if I hadn't et already."
He turned 'round on his bushy tail
and hopped off with his lady.

Now I wonder if I'm really mean
or all that big and scary
that he couldn't talk and stay awhile;
he sure seemed awful wary.

Well that's the breaks if ya get the shakes
over almonds in the park.
I wonder how it was with Noah
on the mountain with his ark.



Boonville

On the hill the fog rests its belly
Cows jog, sheep nestle
The road curls up to meet the warm windows
The long white trailer
And the green one.
We sing inside, frosting cookies
Painting the icing firmly forming
Our childhood dreams.
Like children we circled
And ran a story around:
A beaded necklace
Each designed of dragons
Of Elves, of Grandfather clocks,
Fitted together the dreams
Made a pattern of Good and Evil
And the battle between.

Ode to Parting with Love and from God

Though harsh partings
ever augment the chasms;

With peace,

I recall
the pleasant interludes
of pleasure

dialogue

company,

You summoned music

mist

whispers

warmth

breezes

streams—

Yet now, like the manner
of January snow,
Your Love beds down in my life
as a shroud of white-quiet;
Where bitter winds haunt
whispy atmospheres
and await spring, when the snow
dissipates into new and
fertile brown soil.

Renaissance

Now I can feel free to cry.
Now I can feel free.
Now I can feel.
Now I can...
Now, "I" ...
...Now.

Workshop

Love
is still
is still
somewhere
within
a primordial sub
subconscious
of
me-being
anticipating an
unpremeditated
arousal from
dormancy
but
afraid...afraid...
afraid because
it seems it will be
a
rude awakening.

Simplicity

i don't no nuthin'
cept wen i sees u
i git happy
 don't no wy

i aint so smartt
but wen u tels me sumthin'
i no it's rite
 an i lissens

so u makes me glad
ta no ya
an i wans ta make u happy too
 den we bofe be happy
 ok, god?

Child of Oklahoma

We put the potatoes of our sweat
under the dark, pungent earth,
while the full moon shone overhead.
The light would show God where we planted
so he would know where
to send his blessing.

We walked in the footprints of our ancestors
and saw their visions in our minds.
We gave birth to the great-great-grandchildren
they could see
but never hold.
At night we dreamed their dreams
and by day we lived them.

At sunset we stood on the bank of the pond
where the children swam with the dogs.
And we watched the sun sink into the ocean
that always sits just beyond
the farthest point you can see
in Oklahoma.

A Time To Refrain

You float right by
we nod
and you touch me inside
caressing the distance.
I reach with folded hands across my heart
the joy of our touch
still lies locked in the plan of God.
Our hearts have spoken
but the ribbon has not been cut
and we dare not disobey.

I give kind attention
to your laughter
hear deeply your tearful prayers
your repentances for tiny sins.
But we have kept the truth
have had no hidden moments
nor spent our honor
for now the bridge is raised
and we dare not disobey.

Farmer Brown

Grandfather only flirted with senility
on the days we rode to the stock auction
singing the same verse
of "I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles"
so many times
that even the sheep in the back
were happy to die.

Weather was central.
Baseball was central.
The Russians were central.
The Bible was central.
The other parts of life were alongside the trail,
chicken feathers and onion skin.

The most difficult thing he ever had to do
besides die,
was put his dog to sleep.
He was ancient and familiar,
a cross between the smell of dried leaves
and the taste copper pennies leave in your mouth.

Rain Prayer

I prayed for it to rain
so I could see my street
between the drops.

It rained green
and some remained
on all the trees.

A bold move
that brought winter
to its knees.

Post Word Processor Comedown

frosty high
i pace the base
bored from the plug to the door

too much diditdidit
feeding basic bytes
to the beast
until a long day later
not country music
or cheese bits
can down or dull
the flying edge
nopainnopainnopain
but the inside man is jazzberries
taking the nerve endings
for a walk

another midnight
and time to eat the rug
but I had rug for lunch
no matter

wired
a young cat in a zoo

Eyewitness News

Come with your happytalk and microphone,
your lighttight image-taker and lighttight heart.

Describe the blood and where the bodies fell.
Inform me that my family died and ask me how I feel.
Ask me if I blame the mayor,
 the president
 or hell.

Bend your knee to get in close.
Speak low and sympathize.
Inspire me to get it out,
 to vent my rage before I die.
Catch my tears in your hand,
 look sad yourself
 but do not cry.

Hurry before they cut to the weather.
Or we lose the light.
Or I will slur my words
 and die and step into my night,
 without knowing if I helped you.
Enshrined in your morgue there should be
 my final reasoned thoughts
 and a can of film named after me.

The Man Who Froze

I look at bums to find within
the hollowed eyes of tender men,
a soul as soft, as hard the shell
of whiskey breath.
So hard to tell
if they had summers long ago
or friends who envied them their hope.

I see a man whose life has frayed
whose parents gave his dog away,
whose thoughts of childhood die in pain,
resentful unforgiven stain.
It snowed last night and some before
while sleeping he, at Heaven's door.
If he and God at one time spoke
it was once and long ago.

He met the wall that seems to be
where ideal meets reality.
Forgot to pray, forgot to ask
if there was still a way to go;
couldn't understand the love
and didn't know he didn't know.

West 35th and Others

Empty streets are bloodless veins
through which no life may pass
only wind and wings
and calm
and blowing trash.

The street was shocked to see me there
This day it planned to spend alone
I teased it with my foot
I paused and spoke and left my thoughts
behind
when I went home.

fleeting in morning mists
that cover and hide
come moments of thoughtfulness
without any source of pride
and then one speaks in quiet lips
confessions from the sensitive side

it is now
fall
and i await next
season
thinking of snow, of cold
bitter cold
winter seems but a warm thing
to what i see over my shoulder
so i look again and look forward

in the autumn fullness of things
with trees in colors tempoed
to the whispered dance of leaves
as they boldly (shyly) caress my sleeves

in the contemplation of wings
with birds in patterns southward
through the branches bare and leaning
as they sigh and wave in tender meaning

in the memory of such as these
with winter soon to follow
to the hollows of my mind and soul
are the scenes which bind us one and whole

there are many sides of me
opening doors to many stairways
try to avoid the broken pieces
as i laugh in all the aching places

i love you; you are just like me
insecure, unsure of my humanity

there are many of each of us
and we are looking, looking
through the windows, through the many sides

laughing, aching, looking glass
mocking, mimicking, all the sides
are looking right back

i can hardly find the lines
in all honesty the film is thick across my eyes
i'm not crying because i miss you
though i do
no, it's a much slower weeping

my friend to whom i feel so free with all my frailties
please forgive my frustration
but it all seems so without compassion
history tirades on
i have to stop sometimes
but sometimes i cannot stop

i can hardly find the words
in all of my heart the aching holds
its grip upon the outer edges
i think the innermost is numb
though it isn't
it's much too much for me

my friend to whom i'm trying to touch with my meaning
i have the history books and the lives and deaths,
lives and deaths of those who moved in their time
and dreamt of better times
that have never come for them
they haunt me—
damn them for hoping in me

i can hardly scream at god
i've been screaming at the silence
and silence has embraced me
the crush of tears that is history alone

i was not there in the past
and so i cannot really remember
but i cannot begin to forget

the edges cut sharp
and the picture freezes
i'm leaving
you are leaving

i love you,
you wanted it that way
and i could not escape

i try to get up from the seat
try to think of how to stop the bus
but it is already moving away
the time and distance between us
already forming

i turn to look back for you
the gaping space of a doorway
now empty

i love you with an aching
my loneliness breaking
the memories into pieces
wrinkles and creases

i'm afraid i've fallen
into worn out patterns
pushing words into trying
from thoughts dead or dying

only the aching reminds me
that life can be kind to me
so i love you again
fool i am now and was then

outside the snows come gently
like the layers of my soul
inside my thoughts fall against me
like the separate crystals that glow
as they suspend themselves across the lights
and then disappear
as they scatter out into the night
and i am still here

night
it isn't fair to weep
tears are something close to mockery
all the weeping that could possibly be done
has already been accomplished
who am i to add tears to the task of those now dead?

death
it isn't finished with us yet
memories are something which haunt us
all the dying that went on and on
that too was our accomplishment
who are we to watch the task in other places still come down?
come down like the night.

it isn't fair
it isn't finished
for nazi camp survivor, elie weisel

how our lives slip by and away
without a murmur
have we forgotten
do we still remember?

i recall the lines on your brow
the quizzical quirk of your eyes
oh love, oh love i don't know how
when i hear you laughing
through a memory of mine

i cannot pursue you
but i sometimes stop and curse you

wherever i go you slip into your place
where no one else may go
and often without me knowing
until my heart skips a beat in time

in the time and distance
you left behind in me
parts of me,
lonely searches through the word love,
through the world into the word love.



late at night
i can get so tired
so tired
of the day gone by
more tired that it's gone
than having gone through it

away
wanted to send something to you
would it do?
could i be just enough, bold enough
to let you know
i was getting into that way
feeling beyond the boundaries
i've forgotten how alone it is
to sense people and more people
all around you
all alive around you

inside
it's a sad desperation
and only at these hours
do i wonder god, if god at all
i'm hoping you don't mind
would you mind?
if i whisper a little too shy
for prayer
hear
i am

bittersweet waters
after the fire
that swept away the flames
of a friendship gone sour
doused with trembling anger
no place to find the remnants
the rags or the wretches

so i drink bittersweet desires
after the storm
that took me to your door
and left me facing an enraged wall
which faced me suddenly weak, suddenly small

i know you
have been holding onto
the aching
like the carrier of
the flickering living flame
who runs from dream to dream
and game to game

hold on then
through the chilling wind
you cannot be lost for long
in this constant moving beyond

there will be ground for you
when you are found and through
this we shall least become
on firmer sites, higher beings
of the candle vision

who can tell when winter ends
and spring begins?

my fingers fly across this page
dawning of a new age.

and who knows the second of night
which splits into grey and then,
night again?

the end of the old
no one seems to know.

there are those deep in frigid cold
dark in the dark, alone in their soul
clutched by cruel discontent
the shadows submerge and freeze

there are those but disarrayed
discouraged forms of kicked aside clay
fired by ancient, distant visions
the broken shards arise and breathe

who can tell when the end is near
the final calm before new birth?

(before the fury and the fear
rant and rage, cast and curse
against the quiet creeping fingers
curling from edge to edge of earth)

who can say?

horizons fly across my eyes
dawning of a different sunrise.

i don't feel as if i need
a reason
a long letter
to explain everything
when there is nothing
that words can do

i was thinking anyway of life
and things that grow
of simple dignity

there is some dignity
in the polite way flowers
never murmur apologies
(and so they are without excuse)
never sorry they borrowed
from sun and soil alike
never sorry that after all that
they eventually take all and die

they grow for the sake of the eye
that was made to wet at beauty's whim

but these are thoughts
left to me when there is nothing
that words can do

annie always looked for the biscuit box
first thing out of bed
and made sure the tea was shared
as the last ritual of the night

i can easily think of annie
how little i have forgotten,
still fresh in me
the fragrance of cinnamon cakes

her heart was always morning
nightingale of mft

my heart is an empty gaping room
with sunlight fading through window dust
as my thoughts organize all that i must
get myself into soon and all too soon

my heart is a tight-lipped, crooked smile
with courage mustered against the tears
as my thoughts encounter the past two years
that we had for awhile and all for awhile

my heart is an open aching wound
with cuts of tender waking hours
as my thoughts unfold like subtle flowers
trimmed and left to surely bloom
in an all too empty sunlit room.

I Ching consolation

biting through
today i must begin
i should be ashamed of time wasted
and my hours spent foolishly
but i am not too ashamed—
i am simply not proud

my hope, only hope
is that i can bite through
the obstacle of my undisciplined character
and that i do not mind the bleeding

the healing

you were never a simple thing
never a something i could make
to ease the inconvenience of loneliness

you *are* (and always)
a word speaking
a joke laughing
a life breathing

and

a death crying
as i watch this friendship
dying

only time can heal me

or haunt me

(?) it looked easy for you
—september 1973

my heart is a winsome child
that flashes her show-off smiles,

my heart is a measureless stream
that runs for miles and miles,

my heart is a poet alone
who took her pen in hand
and cried and cried.

my heart is a thunder of emotions
that sing with electricity
that stretch the limits of the sky
with snaps of laughter and delight.

and with the suddenness of an equinox rain
my heart is all yours, all yours,
once again.

—September, 1983

my father's office
has books on books all in rows
but predominant over all of those
hangs one big trout swollen proud
 i suppose
 that fish story is often told

on the other wall my father placed a plaque
which preserves a newspaper clipping in white and black
of him and a famous senator whose name i cannot remember
and next to that another one of him with my mother
 in the corner grows
 the lemon tree he is saving from winter cold

on the edge of his walnut desk under the glass
are the old comic strips which made him laugh
his favorite one depicts the obscure trials of a pastor
it lies there flattened by the years and losing color
 suspended from the upper rows
 a tiny fisherman trembles his toothpick rod

(where did he find such a little boy's toy?)

there are those who love my father
and i know my father loves them and loves them more
than his books, his desk and the office full of his life and character...

his chair is not so worn.

from the ashes of fire
that dance in suspense of the night
towards my eyes of awe and fright
who are unsure of knowledge pain
until the agony of all that i desire
rises in me like a helpless wing

fluttering from the flame
of blackened and charred remains
ready the shape of despair takes hold
and dissipates in a burst of anger bold
of life, from life again

phoenix from the fire
ancient longing rises higher,
ever higher

tremulous calls like the whip-poor-will
fluttering wings that cannot hold still
expressions of a soul in flight

coming to rest on my window sill
peering eyes that cannot be filled
searchings of a mind for an inner light

and i in my room writing poetry
watch this curious bird who flew to me
from far-away lands of brown swept earth
and endless blue skies that daily give birth
to runaway children with long red hair
flowing behind them to horizons of nowhere

and i who usually leave the windows closed
stop for a moment from poetry and prose
to open the latch of my own cloistered heart
and catch the songs of a morning escaping from dark

i'm not quite sure
why i call her my friend
enigmas, complications
innuendos on end...

i'm not quite sure
why i love her at all
open arms, warm embraces
cold, icy walls...

i'm not quite sure
why i let her get to me
visions, conversations
thoughts traveling, traveling...

so my thoughts turn back
to rainy weather, duckies' feathers
stories she'd tell to make me laugh...

and
i'm not quite sure how to live in the space
between high tide, ebb tide
just give her time...
her own place, her own mind

For a friend of a friend

willow
once a friend of mine
i remember how i cried
for a tiny shivering tree
clinging to its simple dignity
against the whipping of the wind

willow
once with branches thick and fine
i remember how i climbed
for a place in my hidden home
where i spared my dreams alone
against the whisper of the leaves

willow
once with courage to the sky
i remember how i tried
for a loving way to let you know
that my world was letting go
against horizons larger than
the weeping of your eyes

(litany call)

in front of the endlessness
of fear and fright of emptiness
i am standing with the wind alone
and were i to leap
would the wind carry me
or could i cross-over
on the screaming wings of my mind?

(and response)

I believe we are to have the wings of eagles
I believe we are to fly to the stars
I believe that every tear you cry
for God and for others
is a jewel that paves the road to heaven

I believe your fearful screams
will mellow into songs of intense joy
and you will want to jump up again
with others take the leap, hand in hand

I believe we all will fly
soon.

Karen Judd Smith

STATION SITTING

Station sitting, and pretty long journey ahead
Across the Punjab past red-dust sunsets.
We saw fields of peasants, thin like weeds
among their crops.
You told me it was too dusty, so we closed
the window, making a carriage oven.
Funny things happen on a journey.
A shoe-shine-boy rebellion, going for double or nothing.
Cramped conversations in compartments
packed with fat ladies.
Yet the same thing *could* happen in London here,
If we were not careful.
Not that the tube is a bit stuffy
Or the sun smogged over.
But let's not mention the crowded compartments
for nothing is *ever* mentioned there.

BRIDGE TOLL

Arterial road bridge,
carrying your traffic
from heart to brain,
but both are asleep.

Red moving tail lights,
transport sleeping minds
back, to north shore
cocoon beds of TV home.

White headlights bring more across
from the suburb motormowerland,
to die further in the city fake.
Headlights beaming like lamps
in empty skulls.

YET

Around me gentle water lap laps,
its elastic skin ululating
in green peacefulness,
and the headland opposite is...
a living tree silhouette,
cut from sky gossamer
and woven into substance.
How Marama, our moon,
is still there.
All creation is sane,
waiting the awaking
of man from his madness.

Rouen

Why am I called for this inglorious task
When the crown I approach brags even sharper thorns?
Why, when quiet sunsets were all I asked
And the mists on the valley and the ripening corn?
Why, when the night must fall at last
And I am not enough for the days unborn?

It was never my fear that the strong would fly,
That cowards would rule and the true betray;
It was never too much that the angels cried,
That the wisest fell and the helpless strayed;
It was never too much when the bravest died—
It was never too much till You went away.

Now the good walk out and in the silence weep,
Black greed goes forth and stalks her men.
Cold in the night as the chains and deep,
I am still awake and trying hard; and when
At home the embers die and the children sleep,
If here the sun should rise, I'll try again.

And I give thanks.
But for You, my life had never been.

TO THE SISTERS

All the gentle, wise ones
Are gently, wisely marching again
Luck to you the dusty windows wave
And the oaks and the sparrows turn their tears away
And Liberty shakes her head in the flicker
Of the old fire: sad, sad
But not forever, no.
They are parting the waters and walking through the sea
They look almost as if they are not afraid
They have knives cutting eternity out of the sky
They are open souls, immortals in ivory
They are a wind breathing seeds upon the hills....
And we but fleas in the horse's tail
Lord oh lord we'll all arrive
But the race is theirs.
And for this there will be thanks
Dusty windows will wave them home
There will be Peace, and Joy,
And all the beauty in the world
Liberty will lift her head
And children dance forever on her lawn
But of the gentle, wise ones
The march, the miracle
Only God will remember all....
Well I could just cry
Just lie down across my country and die lord oh lord
And when I pray I am dumb, somebody,
I am mute
But I am not blind
I sketch wise and gentle symbols across my page.

EXODUS

Lead on, gold Moses.
Your Promised Land lies in shimmer ahead
Silver ripple on black virulent black
And I, from so many thousand feet,
White light blazing through my wings
And caught surrendering
To the great and holy need
To sit still,
Know nothing more.
I have seen it all just now:
How they come, they shine, they smoulder
Shoulder this our entire life, oh yes,
Become the chosen.
I am touched dumb
By an unwritten race
That defies the world for me
Becomes one.

Walk on, good Moses, walk on gold—
Lead us, lead us home—home.
Do I—do I see your eyes brim over
For those who must die in the desert,
Die, die in their sleep;
Do I hear your broken thought: my God,
We're all just trying to get there.
My God
My dear God, we're all
Just trying—

I put my finger to the double pane of glass
and touch your face—
Looking down, I watch the weary millions go,
Tiny puffs of whispered cloud,
Walking across the sea.

BUTTERFLY

Wings

oh good catholic Father

Wrap us tight and

fold us out and

Let us dry light

we are the windows

In the cosmic church

open pilgrim souls

Shed the barren faith

we are the tune

Of the shining summer day

sing us a little man

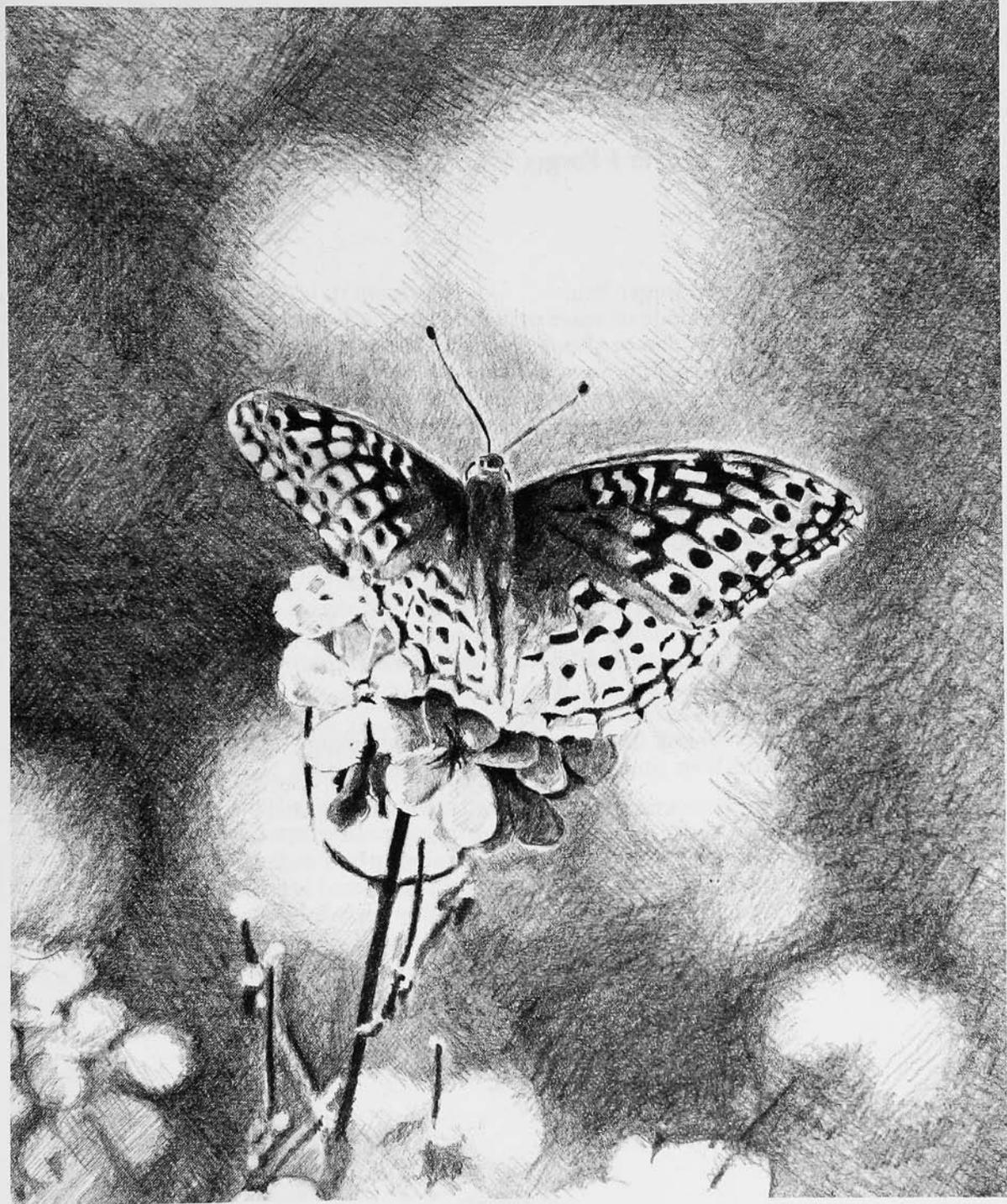
Breathe us like a breath

of eternity drift free

And be absorbed in us

and when we fly

Fly.



If Ever I Forget You

If ever I forget You,
Let You fade or leave or lose You,
Wish to hide or choose to be hid from Your face,
Still there's no place
Where I can be outside Your keeping,
Or where Your weeping doesn't echo in the wind.

I could deny all sights and seeing,
Say Your being was a myth or dream or lie,
But still I'd cry to hear the daybreak,
Sweet with singing, soft with sun,
And run with joy along the ringing ocean's edge.

Were I to stop my ears, my eyes,
Close off the skies and every scent ignore,
Your kisses still will fall like rain to reach me,
Teach me that You live, You are;
And if I forget the very trees,
There's still the breeze of morning meeting
And Your fingers wind a greeting in my hair.

No there's no escaping
Your world's shaping, love or law,
And poor are they who've looked so often without seeing;
Your being is the sunset pageant, gold and bright and tall,
And all who've gazed on dawn have seen Your face.

Forest

Mazed in magenta
The heather-edged trees
Cluster in a nimbus of wind.
Cloud, in a steel drift, sifts claret coldly.
The larches, in their last days,
Are a frieze of fine rain,
Nebuly gold on a sky with a crenellate edge.
The spectre is Death
On this Friday of the world week,
And the wind-song haunts the strong stone
 of my own fibre
With its ache of antiquity.
Oh skeleton trees,
Bone of my bone,
How well I know the shape of your secret growing!

But death is this season's misconception;
It is only that after Autumn,
All activity remains inward.
Winter is an inbreathing—
Cold because warmth is conceiving
Deep in the maiden grain.
Stand then serene in the shadow of the Tree
For life resurrects where dark delves deepest;
Sun's day soon dawns again
And you will be upgathered in its light.

(1981)

Something, Somewhere

There's something sometimes somewher
Miles inside of me
That yearns across the mountains
And the oceans of wild sea,
That looks far further yet
Than where the sun could burn
And for something somewhere
Miles away,
With all of me I yearn.

Deeper than the thunder bounces
Round the slow green hills,
Brighter than the heart of summer
Where the yellow spills;
Above all earth, a quiet,
A piercing peace—
There's *something* there,
Of which only the something
Somewhere
Deep in me's aware

(1972)

Plump Summer Moon

She is full-bodied
yet chaste,
with a lacework of clouds falling
from her waist
which she draws across her creamy face—
her onyx-and-silver veil!

Fundraising

Trudging the summer dust of the highway median strip,
asking money to make the world good again.
Humble business, this,
plodding upon beer bottle shards, struggling ragweed,
yellow cow vetch (crawling o'er the sun-baked sand),
and flattened Whopper boxes,
the hot dust rising merrily
in copper-shimmer puffs!

Harbor-dirge

In the gray morning, the harbor's fog
fuzzes the air,
hushing
the audience of oaks and
maples, beeches, hemlocks
which are huddled—
listening—
on the tiered and bouldered harborside—
listening
motionless
to the harbor's somber concert:
the ships' whistles, fog-muffled,
the mourning of a whistle buoy,
the lute music
of the strings of waves strumming
themselves on the rocks'
fingertips.
The strains stream through the still tangle of
leaves and twigs and branches and trunks
up to the granite rampart
where I stand
resting
in the lave of ether-thin music.

Poem for Beginners

It's easy to bite into
it's soft
like lavender
or suede
it doesn't ask for much
just to be read
it's too simple
to be considered
cultured or abstract

You would expect to find it
next to a Dr. Seuss book
in a dentist's office
it doesn't beg
or give advice
it's pointless
and to the point
of being absurd
it wanders at times
like an old nomad
sometimes you will
find it

slipping off the page

There are no political insinuations
no social statements
just think of it as

- 1) ink on paper
- 2) space filled in
- 3) occupied thought

BUT WATCH IT

Before long
it will creep up on you
you will find yourself
reading between the lines
you'll think, this must have
deeper content, some implications
maybe an analogy

That's it. It's an analogy
to the universal emotions
which bind us all together
in a paradox of frenzied passion
(you'll think, even if it's not
you can make it that way)

you imagine the words
taking on wings
adjectives sprouting antennae
verbs indiscriminately
meeting adverbs
at the conjunction
this is it, you think
the end
and it is.

Abraham's Failure

You couldn't have known
it was going to snow
that day in the Middle
East, things are unpredictable
like that.

And you couldn't have known
that your belly (sick from ptomained pig)
would force you to sleep longer
than usual, and besides your alarm
never went off anyway.

"It was an oversight, a simple
mistake," you would cry later.
"After all that blood and entrails,
the chalky bone of an old heifer,
What are two birds in the bush
worth anyhow?"

Maybe it was just his imagination
the way storms sometime have a way
of making you feel ashamed,
or how thunder takes on voices
when you're already that afraid.

On Dealing With Communists

Never close your eyes
to hungry animals
who smell of lies and old bones

REFLECTUS

I look upon the days behind and brood
For I have left them not completely filled.
My actions, sometimes thoughtless, harsh, or crude
are there recorded—time abused or killed.

The hearts I've touched, though not so soft at times
Cry out for more—or less—than what I gave.
This time a balm, that time those heartless crimes.
They come to soothe, or haunt me to my grave.

I cannot change what time and distance seal,
But now, beyond, my story will be told.
To all who listen: May I learn to feel,
And warm the hearts and hands that once were cold.

The person that I was before is dead.
A new man, now, I step and step ahead.

Oh my soul
Let not my love fade
Nor engaged hearts twist apart
Let not the pain of ignored gifts
Turn the timid impulse of my heart back
Only to dwell within a vacant reality
Lost behind locked doors
In a world without knowledge
Without demands
In a world without pain

My plea is fear unfolding
To be consumed only by your courage
To look past dusty reflections
Into circles
Of shadows
Down to where the unmoved
May be the moved in you
Sire, turn around
Look to the one everywhere
And nowhere
Else I fear a world will implode.

(5th February, 1983)

The Fullness of Time

Eternity is whispering its secrets
Into the sin-deafened ears of time:
The journey to the Father's house continues,
But now—never again, alone!

The trees clap their hands for the joy of it all,
The clefted rocks smile with glad astonishment;
The snow-crowned mountains stand on tip-toe
Trying to peek into heaven's courtyard.

The golden hem of the sun's garments
Brushes the giggling grass;
The rainbow is chuckling, the span of its seven-hued smile
Painting the horizon with the show of twice-born hope;
The sky is rejoicing, laughing till it's blue in the face

The fullness of time has come,
As the Gospel descends on the wings of a song:
Joy to the world! The Lord has come!
Traveling in the greatness of His strength,
God has restrained the sword-arm
Of the death-angel,
And his banner over us is Love

The Hen

the hen is silent
I never know where she is

the proud rooster tells me everything
his love life
his hunger
his smallest wish.

she knows hiding places
and goes there for such long times
in soft white breathing
there gleaming in safe clucking darkness

I worry about her
she is soft with eggs
full of simple mystery.

Destroy All Monsters

Fresh in my mind
the girl in leopard skirt
and glittering eyes sings
of death, drugs
and related things,
while the senseless Scandinavian kids
smile wide and dance.

Needing some refreshment
going around asking everyone for innocence,
acting as if it were a stick
to be retrieved,
I was finally out for a master
and unable to even find a vendor
I retreated to a cavernous white room with
scattered steel chairs.

And afterward, at the party
the realization repeated—that
only with borrowed strength will I be able to
fend off the stranger's smiled offering
of this, that and even her,
Please God help me, I'm trying hard to
destroy all monsters.

Three mallards whisper together
wondering what Sunday will bring.
I wander out to a
midnight shadowed meadow skating pond.
Orion, beside the big dipper,
shines in a clear winter's sky
on the night of the virgin moon
the haze surrounds the first night's crescent
i slide on the ice
filled with childhood memories
of saturday hockey games
and changing skates
in a hastily thrown together
wooden shack
my fingers and toes
numb with
chicago's winter wind

Troika

You came.
You went.
Some time was spent.
And Love was grown.
How glad I am
to have known
you, both.

Sometimes
there is so much
water
under the Bridge
it is washed away.

And a new one
must be made.

Dear God!
You numbed the pain
allowed me to go on
and even
warmed
beyond all reason.
it loved like rain.
wind
will re-arrange,
And now, the Blue Sky.

Great fish of mysterious waters
Prince of the wide ocean—
Many tears are shed for you on land.
Songs are sung in far-off places.
Prayers said on starless nights.

We wait for you each day
as people wait for dawn,
or spring in the cold mountains:
We wait as if your coming
would kindle fire in a dying heart.

The ocean hides its jewels well—
It tells its secrets quietly
And murmurs a strange language on our shores
It shares itself with those only
who offer their years their toil
even their blood;
It cannot surrender to what is false.

Giant fish—
You, who do not deserve to die,
And we who do not deserve to kill you
Will meet
And give to this loveless world our lives
Great fish from the brilliant sea.

A River of Birds

Escaped into the just-breaking dawn, a misty morning. As I stepped out of the door my ears were filled with a mighty roar, never heard before, a sound that stopped me in my tracks. Flying south across the sunrise was a dense river of birds, maybe half a mile away but filling the air with the mass of their voices, each chattering and chiming, swelling to a noise like a waterfall that passed and passed into the distance. A few groups fell away from the main body and swooped down on our fields and woods to feed, disappearing into the treetops like windblown seeds in the grass. Blackbirds? Starlings? And where going? I walked to the back gate in awe: admiring the golden-red leaves of a maple, each marbled with beads of cold fog and glowing like amber. I noticed stretched between the fingers of one leaf a perfect radial web, misted white, and at the center its tiny maker, curled and fast asleep, hanging in the windless morning, safe as a bird on a ship.

There is a special Hudson sunrise that seems to rise out of the water itself, spreading across the lupin-blue sky and making itself at home over the mountains. Our river flows two ways and the Indians named it for that: twice a day turning the landscape inside out to go back where it came from, playing with the tides and dizzying the poor dreamers who live along its edge. Does it have a right way and a wrong way? Or an upside down and a right way up for the limpid morning sky I see in the water? A couple walks by the river, hand in hand; some couples I know are enjoying their marriage from opposite sides of the world. My friend doesn't see his wife very often and sometimes that seems to be a misfortune...

That night the same throng of birds again, flying north with as much chatter and celebration as they had made going south in the morning: thousands of fluttering specks reflected in the river until a small wind merges sunset, clouds and journeying birds into one.

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