

Afterwards

(Chamber 17)

I've set loose the guards that stand before my door.
I've let cells collide in suicide until they take me.
If there were stories left to tell I would hear them.

Behind the waterfalls of channeled panic
spilling their prideful progeny I can stay hidden in the noise.
Being invisible has its cameo rewards.
It also keeps visible the durable lifeform
murmuring beneath the wickedness.
This is truly the only creature I care to know,
with luminous ways of sweet generosity that suffers
in the untelling universe of the unlistening ear.

When I am found out—after I am gone—by a stranger's
heart whose drill bit is not dulled by impersonation,
I will open eyes, peel away skin, awaken the heart's coma.
I will set aside the costumed figure and redress the host
so its image can be seen in mirrors I set forth
with words bugged by God.
When these words are spoken,
another ear is listening on the other side
beaming understanding like lasers their neutral light.

The common grave of courage holds us all
in the portal of singularity,
the God-trail of rebeginning.

Somehow, so seldom, words and images
thrust their meaning into heaven and conquer time.
But when they do,
they become the abracadabra of the sacred moment.
The pantomime of the public's deepest longing.

Afterwards, the improbable eyelid glances open,
the skin folds away,
and the heroic eye awakens and remains alert.
Afterwards, the words eat the flesh and leave behind
the indigestible bitterness.
The emotional corpse shed,
an insoluble loneliness.
The cast of separation.



Another Mind Open

(Chamber 8)

There was a fire where smoke gathered
and danced like rivers without gravity
to the rattle of drums.

Sometimes I would look inside the smoke
but it curled away and covered itself
with a cloak so opaque I could only cry.
It became the mask of its consumption.
The dream of its new life.
The victorious skin always changing
yet everlasting.

There was a fire last night
that proclaimed news of a newer testament
that drinks tears, lies, vile words, even
the deep fears that linger underneath the turncoat.

I usually lurch away when it calls.
To me, it burns too cold
like a skinwalker lost in a body
devoured by time.
Sometimes I would dream it alive
and it would blaze – vibrant sun –
more durable than a grave.

In times of stillness
it would speak like a codicil of some lidless dream
that words could not preserve.
*"The time has come to lift your gaze
from the fire's brightness
and cast shadows of your own."*
The words would echo into oblivion
like stars lost in the swell of the sun's awakening.

In these flames I see my
consumption fit and proper.
In its smoke
I am stored away like so many jars
in a broom closet.
Waiting to flee.
Drawing my feet to oppose the floor.
Struggling to reach the door inside these jars of sealed air.



Stories escape the writer's hand
and pursue me as though I alone held their vigil.
Their very soul.
When indeed these stories have never been told.
They have never found words
to hold though they ceaselessly try.

Fires blind nature.
They invest their life in her death.
But the end is always beginning
toward another end.
And the dreams of the untold
are always pursuing another mouth,
another hand,
another mind open.

Sometimes I look to the errant expression of hope,
and ask it to bring its flames deeper into my heart.
To burn a clear sense of purpose.
To burn away the fool's crevice
and enshroud me in its skin of smoke.

Sometimes I offer myself to these flames
and know they listen.
Devising my world.
Reality coalesces around their finery
like a tower of glass enclaves a shell of steel.

Sometimes I feel the flames send me
words, notes, tones.
Enchantment.
Products of another kind.
Tiny crucibles of earth that burn so brightly
they can blind the sun's creatures of whimsy.

And sometimes, without even thinking,
I peek into these flames
when the smoke peels away for an instant.
There, behind the mask, is my future.
Our future.
The future.
The present in another world.
Calling out for another mouth,
another hand,
another mind open.

Another

(Chamber 5)

One skin may hide another,
I remember this from a poem when I
launched a fire across a field of deadness.
At least, to me, it seemed dead.
I felt like a liberator of life force
renewing the blistered and dying grasses.
Actually, more weeds than grass,
but nonetheless, the flora had flat-lined.
I peeled back skin with holy flame
and brought everything to black again
as though I called the night to descend.
From blackness will arise a new skin
cresting green architecture from a fertile void.

As the flames spread their inviolable enchantment
I saw your face spreading across my mind.
Remember the fire we held?
I hoped it would unfurl a new skin
for us as well.
Forever it will roam inside me
invariant to all transformations and motions.

One person may hide another,
but behind you, love is molting a thicker skin
than I can see through.
No flame can touch its center.
No eyes can browse its memory.
I want nothing behind you in wait.
Seconds tick away like children growing
in between photographs.
I will not forget you in the changes.
Cursed with memory so fine
I can trace your palm.
I can inhale your sweet breath.
I can linger in your arms' weight.
I can hear your exquisite voice
calibrate life with celestial precision.

One purpose may hide another.
I heard this as the fire died out



to reveal the scent of the wet earth
and growing things.
I could feel my love decompose,
returning to the uninhabited realm
where it belongs.
Where all hearts belong when
love is lost, and the code of the mute,
coiled in fists that pound,
reveal the wisdom of another.



Bandages of the Beast

(Chamber 2)

There were many random omens.
Sending olive branches with thorns was
only one of your repertoire.
You offered me a book
where all the answers lay encoded in
some strange dialect.
Symbols undulating like serpents restless for food.

If I was windborne as a lambent seed you
would still the air
and I would fall into the thicket.
If I yearned for sweet water
you would pass me the bitter cup.
If I was an injured fawn you would flush me
from the cloister, corner me against cold stone,
and admire my fear.

Everywhere I steer I seek the one look of love;
yet love humbles itself like a mannequin
changing its clothes to accommodate the dressmaker.
Underneath there are bandages of the beast.
Underneath there is the tourniquet of deliverance.
But beneath the shell there is emptiness, so defiant
it is clothed in finery that neither
dressmaker nor beast can touch.

You have mistaken my search as my soul.
Raking through it for clumps of wisdom,
you have found only what I have lost to you.
Held like rootless dreams
I will vanish in your touch.

If you pass your rake over this emptiness
you will feel clumps of my spirit.
You will find me like tiny pieces of mirror broken
apart yet still collected in one spot.
Still staring ever skyward.
Still reflecting one mosaic image.
Still the accompanist of myself.



Circle

(Chamber 11)

I have found the ancient mirror
that leads me.
I have seen its ruthless eyes
that always stare,
burrowing their way to the crown I wear.
I have sensed the holy fire
like a blazing cocoon
that offers no judgments
amidst its power strewn.
I have felt the innocent light.
Of clarity in flight over native land
where we are birthed apart
from one command.

I have touched the gentle eye
that outlasts me.
The huge patience upon my brow.
I have offered all my earthly wisdom
for the symptoms of its tongue;
to drop its seeds into the fields that I plow.
I have seen destiny's path
gathering its flock
for the journey of endless spaces.
I have watched futures fall with eyelids closed
and the gnawing tears of torn places.
I have seen the Tribe of Light
return the clock to the black pocket
where all divisions occur.
Where weeds secure the humble land
of fires unlit, yet pure.

I have heard the masters of masters speak
to every cell of my body;
cutting new pathways in flesh
like fear's executioner.
I have watched the galaxies twirl
like star wheels that spiral to the thought
of a holy vision.
I have felt my spirit follow
the one sound that is free.



I have vanished before.
I have taken this body to an inner place
where none can see.
Only feelings can hear the sound of this space.
This sacred place alone
has brought me here to recover the thread.
To see the weaving dance that calls my name
in a thousand sounds.
That draws my spirit
in a single, perfectly round,
circle.



Forever

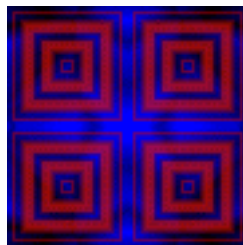
(Chamber 9)

Memory, like a root in darkness,
piercing light with its stem
has found me.
Ordering my world
like architecture of feelings
bound to you,
held for you as shields of hope.
In the dispersion of love,
identical throbbing
has been our call
answered in the sweetest caress
two can share.
And you wonder if ecstasy will diminish us
like rain the sun or
wind the calm.
When we know one another
in the deepest channel of our hearts
we can only utter one word
cast from this stone's mind: *forever*.
Forever.

When winter calls my name
in the highest desert of light,
I will not despair because I know you
in the deepest channel of my heart
where I understand the word, forever.
Instantly healed by your caressing lips
that unmask all that has tortured me.
The panting of mouths
tired but astir in passion's flame
can only cease when I have entered you
forever.
I carry you in this flame,
emerald-colored from my dreams of you
beneath the trees within
where your beauty consumed the sun
and snared my soul so completely.
I cannot truly know you apart
from a throne.



Spirits made to shine beyond the din
of boorish poets
that strike flint below water and cry without passion.
I have known you forever
in lonely streets
and the thundered plain.
In wilted villages and cool mountain terraces.
I have watched all of you
torn open to me speaking like a river
that moves on forever.
And I have waited
like the greedy mouth of an ocean
drawing you nearer to my lips
so I can know you forever
as you empty into me abandoned of all fear.



Imperishabl e

(Chamber 6)

Through this night I have slept little.
My eyes, closed like shutters
with slats that remain open,
wait to invent dreams
of some charred reality.
I sense you, but no weight on my bed.
No shift or creaking other
than my own restlessness.

Wandering words
self-gathered, self-formed,
and released to the night
like a mantra slowly drowned in music.
Your presence grew with the music
devouring it in silence.
You came to me so clear
my senses aroused in electric storms of clarity.
The buzz of mercury lamps
alongside rutted roads,
shedding their weightless light.

In all of this waiting for you
no fortress or foxhole bears my name.
I lay on the Savannah
staring at the sun hoping against hope
it blinks before I do.
My wounded cells,
tiny temples of our mixture,
have weakened in your absence.
I can feel them wail in their miniature worlds.
My feet resist their numbness,
deny them their war.

As I lay here alone
waiting to be gathered into your arms,
I ask of you one thing,
remember me as this.
Remember me as one who loves you
beyond yourself.
Who pierces shells, armor, masks,



and everything protecting
your spirit in needless fervor.
Remember me as this.
As one who loves you unmatched
by the deepest channels
that have ever been forged.
Who will love you anywhere and always.

And if you look very closely at my love
you will not find an expiration date,
but instead, the word, *imperishable*.



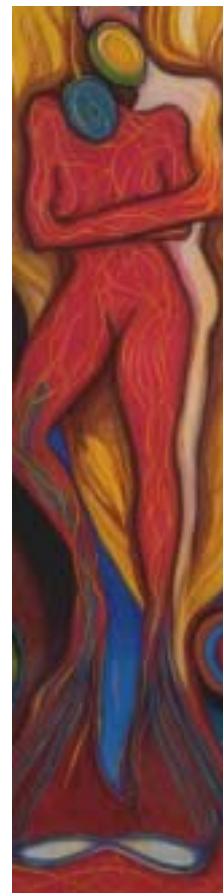
In the Kindness of Sleep

(Chamber 22)

I visited you last night when you
were sleeping with a child's abandon.
Curled so casual in sheets
inlaid by your beauty.
I held my hand to your face
and touched as gently
as I know how
so you could linger with your dreams.
I heard soft murmurs that only angels make
when they listen to their home.
So I drew my hand away
uneasy that I might wake you
even as gentle as I was.

But you stayed with your dreams
and I watched as they found their way to you
in the kindness of sleep.
And I dreamed that I was an echo of your body
curled beside you like a fortune hunter
who finally found his gold.
I nearly wept at the sound of your breath,
but I stayed quiet as a winter lake, and bit my lip
to ensure I wouldn't be detected.

I didn't want to intrude
so I set my dream aside
and I gently pulled your hand from underneath
the covers to hold.
A hand whose entry into flesh
must have been the lure that brought me here.
And as I hold it
I remember why I came
to feel your pulse
and the beating of your heart in deep slumber.
And I remember why I came in the
kindness of sleep...
to hold your hand, touch your face
and listen to the soft breathing
of an angel,
curled so casual in sheets
inlaid by your beauty.



Life Carriers

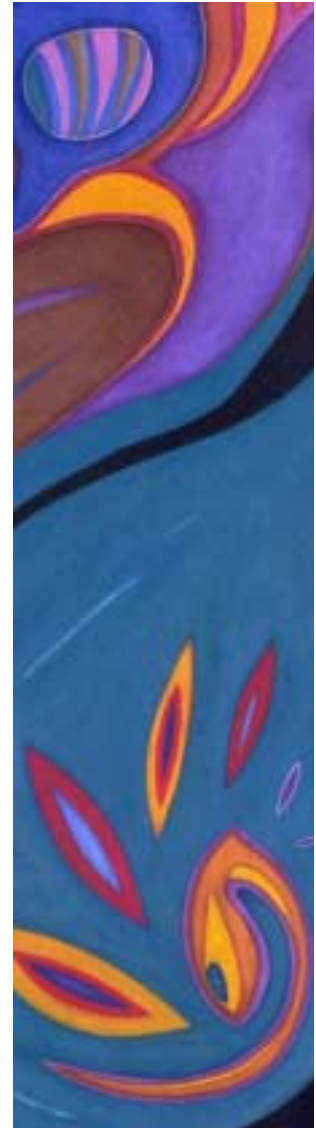
(Chamber 5)

Life carriers spawn in the primal waters
of a giant embryo.
Their progeny will settle in human dust.
Pieces of clay
with tiny thoughts of flight.
Knife-points veiled in turbid cloaks
that shun the light of a tranquil star.

In the remote wilds the life carriers
emerge and perch upon
the shoulders of gray stones.
They signal their desires to fly,
but their homes are suited
for the comforts of rain and earth.
The sky must wait.
(The dirt companion smiles.)

Circles break.
Barriers overrun.
Life carriers deny their ancient pull
from the ground.
Wings sprout like golden hair
sinuous with nature's artifice.
Ragged feet are left behind.
The earth replaced with vivid sky.
Gravity shines its menacing stare
to hold them
with assertive hands.

Homeless cages
are left to rot.
To sink behind the groundless sky.
Earthen faces have dropped their smiles
and lost their smell of fresh dirt.
The dream of flight
has invaded somber walls--
life carriers have bounded
to the other side.
There they meet the next rung
of the endless ladder,
and trade their wings for wisdom's eye.



Like the Song of Whales

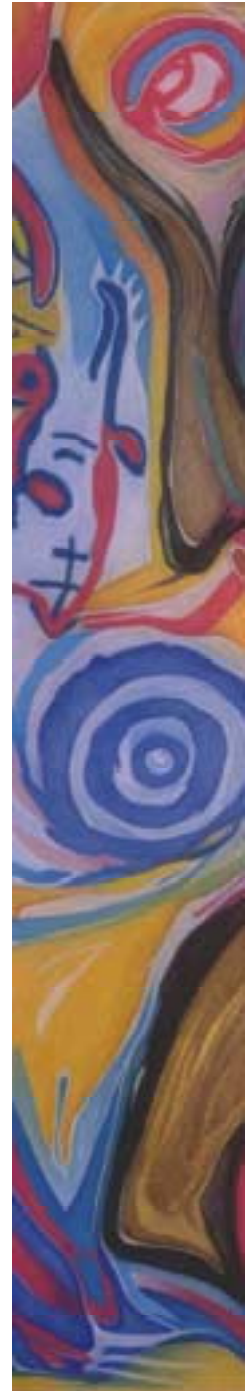
(Chamber 7)

Your voice lingers when it speaks
like rippling heat over desert floor.
It draws my heart and I find myself
leaning toward its source
as though I know it will take me
where you always are.
It draws me near to your breath—the spiracle that
holds the words of home.
It draws me to the blanket you hold
around your soul you so willingly share.

If you were to dive below the waters
where the whales sing their songs
into the gathering of deep currents
that pull our courage along,
channels that flow free of worldly levels,
you would find me there.
Listening to the voice I hear in you.
Feeding my heart in the waters of deep blindness
where currents flow
mindful of you and your spirited ways.

Sometimes I listen so perfectly
I hear your soft breath forming words
before they are found by you.
Before you can bring them from
the deep blindness to your heart.

I wish I could take your hand
and let it hold my heart
so you could see what I know of you.
So you could know
where we live where we always are.
And you could pull your blanket of words
around us and I could simply listen
to your voice
that honors words
like the songs of whales.



Listening

(Chamber 1)

I am listening for a sound beyond sound
that stalks the nightland of my dreams,
entering rooms of fossil-light
so ancient they are swarmed by truth.

I am listening for a sound beyond us
that travels the spine's
invisible ladder to the orphic library.
Where rebel books revel in the unremitting light.
Printed in gray, tiny words with quicksand depth
embroidered with such care they
render spirit a ghost, and God,
a telescope turned backwards upon itself
dreaming us awake.

Never-blooming thoughts surround me
like a regatta of crewless ships.
I listen leopard-like,
canting off the quarantine of bodies
sickened by the monsoon of still hearts.
There is certain magic
in the heartbeat which crowds the sound I seek,
but it is still underneath the beating I wish to go.
Underneath the sound of all things
huddled against the tracking dishes
that turn their heads to the sound of stars.

I am listening for a sound unwound,
so vacant it stares straight with the purity to peer
into the black madness of time
sowing visions that oscillate in our wombs,
bearing radiant forms as the substrate of our form.

When I look to the compass needle
I see a blade of humility
bent to a force waylaid like wild rain
channeled in sewer pipes.
Running underground
in concrete canals that quiver,
laughing up at us as though we were lost
in the sky-world with no channel for our ride.



I am listening for a sound
in your voice,
past the scrub terrain of your door
where my ear is listening on the other side.
Beneath your heart where words go awkward
and light consumes the delicate construction of mingled lives.
I can only listen for the sound I know is there,
glittering in that unpronounceable, stateless state
quarried of limbs so innocent
they mend the flesh of hearts.



Missing

(Chamber 4)

Facing another evening without you
I am torn from myself
in movements of clouds,
movements of earth spinning
like the sure movement of lava as it rolls to sea.
Yet when I arrive from my dream
you are still gone from me
twenty-three footsteps away;
a bouquet of the abyss.

When I look to the east I think of you
softly waiting for the vines to abdicate
their portion of your heart.
So you can be chiseled
out of the matrix
with smooth hammer strokes
from my hands.
Freed of the coal,
the black rot of untouched shoulders,
you can open your eyes again
flashing the iridescent animals,
valiant vibrations of your rich spirit.

Centerpiece of my table
I stare at you in candlelight,
the windows behind, black in their immensity,
only enlarge you.
Making you more of what I miss.
The procession of prophecies
has entered me again,
casting doubt in my mind
like rain on dead leaves.

I go among your body
to feel the presence of your heart beating
something golden
spun from another world.
You can feel me when this is done
though I am invisible in all ways to you, but one.
A reflection in the mirror.
Beneath your eyes
you see me dancing away the body.



Dancing away the mind.
Dancing away the incarnations
of my absence.



Nothing Matters

(Chamber 16)

Space is curved
so no elevator can slither to its stars.
Time is a spindle of the present
that spins the past and future away.
Energy is an imperishable force
so permanence can be felt.
Matter flings itself to the universe,
perfectly pitiless in its betrayal of soul.

You can only take away
what has been given you.

Have you not called the ravens the foulest of birds?
Is their matter and energy so different than ours?
Are we not under the same sky?
Is their blood not red?
Their mouth pink, too?

Molten thoughts, so hot they fuse space and time,
sing their prophecies of discontent.
Listen to their songs in the channels of air
that curl overhead like temporary tattoos
of light's shimmering ways.

Am I merely a witness of the betrayal?
Where are you who are cast to see?
How have you been hidden from me?
Is there a splinter that carries you to the whole?

If I could speak your names I would call you to my side
and take your hands so gentle you would not see me,
feeling only the warm passage of time
and the tremor of your spine moving you to weep.

Space is curved so I must bend.
Time is a spindle so I must resolve its center.
Energy, an imperishable force I must ride.
And matter, so pitiless I refuse to be betrayed.



So I stand naked to the coldest wind
and ask it to carve out an island in my soul
in honor of you who stand beside me in silence.
Lonely, I live on this island assured of one thing:
that of space, time, energy, and matter;
nothing matters.
Yet when I think of you in the cobwebbed corner,
hovelled without wings
like a seed planted beneath a dead tree stump,
I know you are watching
with new galaxies wild in your breast.
I know you are listening
to the lidded screams smiling their awkward trust.
All I ask of you is to throw me a rope sometimes
so I can feel the permanence of your heart.

It's all I need in the face of nothing matters.



Of Beckoning Places

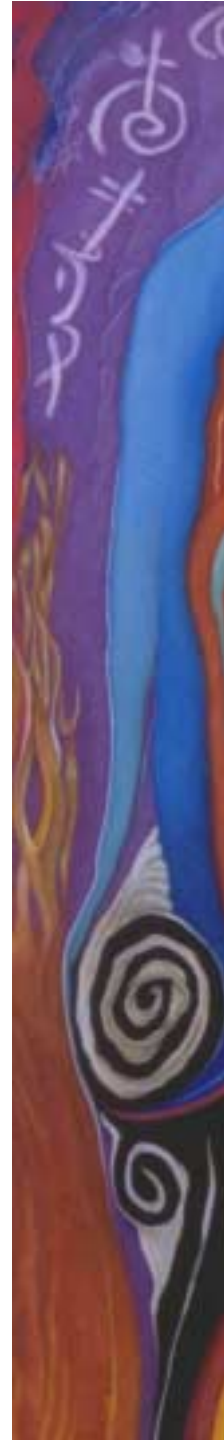
(Chamber 19)

Of beckoning places
I have never felt more lost.
Nothing invites me onward.
Nothing compels my mouth to speak.
In cave-like ignorance, resembling oblivion,
I am soulless in sleep.
Where are you, beloved?
Do you not think I wait for you?
Do you not understand the crystal heart?
Its facets like mirrors for the clouds
absent of nothing blue.

Invincible heaven with downcast eyes
and burning bullets of victory that peel through flesh
like a hungry ax,
why did you follow me?
I need an equal not a slayer.
I need a companion not a ruler.
I need love not commandments.

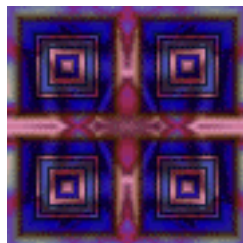
Of things forgotten
I have never been one.
God seems to find me even in the tumbleweed
when winds howl
and I become the wishbone in the hands
of good and evil.
Why do they seek me out?
What purpose do I serve
if I cannot become visible to you?

You know, when they put animals to sleep
children wait outside
as the needle settles the debt of pain and age.
The mother or father write a check and
sign their name twice that day.
They drop a watermark of tears.
They smile for their children
through clenched hearts beating
sideways like a pendulum
of time.



And I see all of this and more in myself.
A small animal whose debts are soon to be settled.
Children are already appearing outside
waiting for the smile of parents to reassure.
The signature and watermark
they never see.

Of winter sanctuary
I have found only you.
Though I wait for signals to draw me from the cold
into your fire
I know they will come even though I fumble for my key.
Even though my heart is beheaded.
Even though I have only learned division.
I remember you and the light above your door.



Of Luminous Things

(Chamber 9)

Of luminous things I have so little experience
that I often think myself small.
Yet when I think of you and your luminous ways
my being swells with hope and prayers
that you will permit the flames to grow.

In mercy, we are torn apart into separate worlds
to find ourselves over and over
a thousand times aching for the other half.
To dream of nothing but the One between us.

Of luminous things I have squandered none
nor have I held them to my heart and asked them
to dissolve into me.
Yet when I think of you, I desire only this.
And if you disrobed your Self and watched it
watch you, you would see me as clearly as I am.
Not small and unworthy.
Unafraid of fear.
Not uncertain like empty space.
But luminous like white light before the prism.

In my thoughts I hold your heart
sculpting away the needless
for the essence.
And when I find it
I will hold it to my heart and ask it
to dissolve into me.
I will know of luminous things
that hurtle through time
bringing us the uncharted, unfathomable
desire we have never spoken.
Words are not curious enough to say their names.
Only love can weep their identity,
and I am so perfectly defenseless to its music.



Of This Place

(Chamber 6)

Her heart ran
in the wilds of deserted plains.
Sun-etched land barren of clouds
and singing water.
If she listened closely
her hand would call
and signal its thoughts upon her brow.
But in this place
she could only offer her arms to the sky
like a tree its branches
and a flower its leaves.

In this dusty basin,
silence gathered like smoke
clearing the mind of the scoundrel.
The infidel of thoughts.
Blots of yellow leaves and white bark
could be seen hiding in pools of life
surrounded by red rock spires.
Clustered sand monuments held together
by some other life form.
She wasn't sure.
Perhaps one life is the same as another
only tilted sideways.
Caught from underneath
by some invisible hand that animates
even the coldest stone of this place.

A smile emerged and perched upon her face
drinking the sun's clear ways.
She could spear
a million miles of air in a glance
and send the window of her flesh
into the cloudless sky.
Upon this ocean a hawk sailed ever closer.
She watched the silver speck
spiral overhead dreaming through its eyes.
Feeling the winds gild her wings
in the softest fold of time.
A tree of pine sent its sky roots
deep within the air to weep its sweetness.



She entered,
gliding through branches
to every needle in their factory of air.

So strange to feel the pull of earth in flight,
but she knew the antagonism well
in the splendor of this place.
She knew it had settled deep,
lodged like permanent ink
in the heart of her.
Under skin, muscle, bone
it fought the single path.
What madness calls her away?
What dream is stronger than this?
What heart beats more pure?

Of this place,
it is so hard to know which is host
and which is guest.
Which is welcome, which is pest.
Which is found and which is lost.
Which is profit, which is cost.

She gave her prayers
to the skypeople and waited for a cloud--
her signal to leave.
She should return home
before dusk settles in and the golden
eyes peer out against the black code.
In a single breath she held the ancient ways
that never left.
She turned them inside out
and then outside in.
Again and again.
Waiting for her signals in the sky.
If not a cloud...
then perhaps a shooting star.
(Besides, it was too dark for clouds anymore.)

When the first star fell she held her breath
afraid she would miss its spectral flight.
She wondered with whom she shared
its final light.

What other eyes were heaven bound
in that secret moment?
Was this their signal home as well?
And what was it they found
buried so deep in a whisper of light
that none can tell?

She waited with solemn eyes
for more stars to fall,
to gently sweep her away
from the magnets of this place.
If she listened to her hand
it would scratch a sign in the sand for another
to take her place.
It would touch the land
in honor of its grace and wisdom,
and become a tree, rock, hawk, or flower.



One Day

(Chamber 4)

One day,
out of this fleshy cocoon
I will rise like a golden bird of silent wing
graceful as the smoke of a fallen flame.
I will dream no more of places
Hidden – secreted away in heaven's cleft
where the foot leaves no print.

One day,
I will walk in gardens holding hands
with my creation and creator.
We will touch one another
like lovers torn by death
to say goodbye.
We will lay in one another's arms
until we awaken as one
invisible to the other.

One day,
I will isolate the part of me
that is always present.
I will dance with it
like moonlight on water.
I will hold it to myself in a longful embrace
that beats perfection
in the hymn of the Songkeeper.

One day,
when I curl away inside myself
I will dream of you
this flesh-covered-bone of animal.
I will yearn to know your life again.
I will reach out to you
as you now reach out to me.
Such magic!
Glory to covet the unknown!
That which is is always reaching for the self
that cheats appearances.
Who dreams itself awake and asleep.
Who knows both sides of the canvas
are painted, awaiting the other
to meld anew.



Temptress Vision

(Chamber 2)

A temptress vision has encircled me like a
willful shadow of a slumbering dream.
Is it the powerful light of purpose?
If I squint with all my strength I may see it.
Always must it be inside of me
like a pilot fish inseparable from its host.
It fearlessly drinks my essence.
Such a bitter taste I muse.
Spit it out upon your table of perfection.
Compare this grain of sand with your galaxy.
This spire of sorrow with your deepest eye.
If my callous mind can see you,
there are no interventions.
No pathway away.
Convergence.

I am a lock-picker.
A tunnel-digger.
A fence-cutter of the wicked watchers.
A traveler that has sought
the mystery that alludes all but the outlaws.
The wild-eyed, unrelenting fools of purpose
that remain outside the laboratory of wingless flight.

You are the eternal Watcher
who lives behind the veil of form and comprehension,
drawing forth the wisdom of time
from the well of planets.
You cast your spell and entrain all that I am.
Am I just a fragment of your world?
A memory hidden by time?
A finger of your hand driven by a mind
unfamiliar with skin.
Touch yourself and you sense me.
Visions wild with love.
Splendor that beckons like a secret whisper of gladness
spread on the winds by an infinite voice.
The sound of all things unified.
I am part of that voice.
Part of that sound.
Part of that secret whisper of gladness.

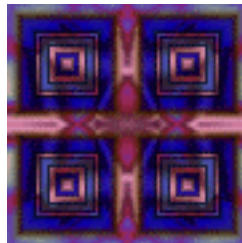


This limitation must end in lucid flesh.
The dream of sparks ascending
quicken the cast of hope.
Avoid the brand of passivity
the signs complain.
Shun manipulation before you are stained.
Spurn all formula and write new equations
in the language of sand.
Heed no other,
nor listen to the seduction of holy symbols
standing before the windows of truth.
Define from a foreign tongue.

These are the battered keys
that have led me to unlocked doors.
Doors that collapse at a mere breath
and behind which
lay more pieces to collect for the Holy Menagerie.
The never-ending puzzle.

All the stars in the sky
recall the purpose of your hallowed light.
Burn a hole through the layers.
Peel all the mockery away.
Enjoin the powers
to answer this call:
Bring the luminous vision
hidden behind the whirling particles
of the Mapmaker.
Let it enter me
like a shaft of light that enters a cave's deepest measure.
Ancient fires still burn in these depths.
Who tends them?
What eyes are watching?
Waiting.
Waiting for time's flower to bloom.
To submerge in the relentless subtlety
that moves beyond my reach
with a jaguar's stealth.
To dream of elder ways
that leap over time
and leave behind the puzzle of our making.

O' temptress vision
you steal my hunger for human light.
If there is anything left to hollow
let it be me.
If there is anything left to cage
let it run free.
If there is anything left to dream
let it be our union.



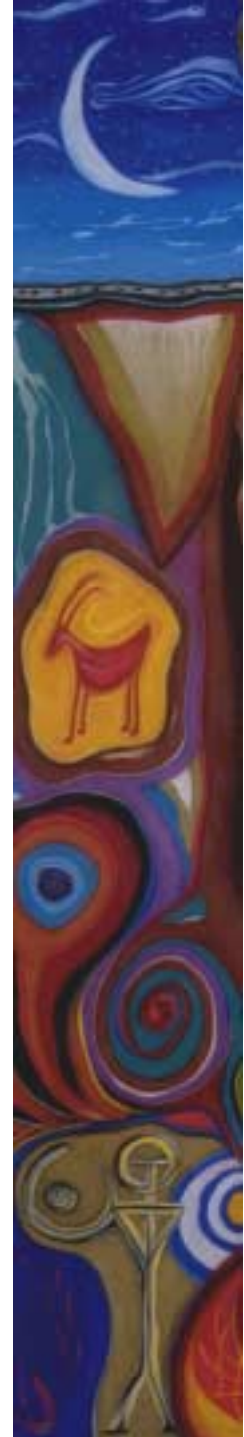
Union

(Chamber 7)

You are not here.
In this moment all that exists is here.
But you are not.
There are so many footprints
leading to my door.
Let us enter, they say.
We cannot sleep in the desert
it is too cold.
Our tears will dry too fast.
Our ears will hurt from the silence.
Let us in.
And so I gather them all up,
swing wide my door,
and step aside as they enter
hoping they will lay in peace beside my fire.

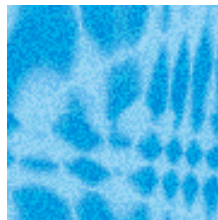
You were not among them.
I looked everywhere for your face
and saw only mimicry.
The blind eye buried behind brain
searching for your heart.
An antenna so alert
there is a peculiar nearness of you
flying inside my body.
I can hold this like a tiny bird in my hands;
fragile, vulnerable, waiting
for my move to decide its fate.

You are not here.
I wish I could reach your skin,
remove the camouflage
tearing it away like black paper
held before the sun as a shield.
Unbundle you from your other lives
and distill you in my now.
You are my last love,
my final embrace of this world
and all the others that drop their prints at my door
are dimmed by your approaching steps.



I can see you will be here soon.
There is victory in my heart
and something invisible yet massive wants to speak.
Reminding me of you and your coming.
Quick, I plead, give me your lips.
Give me your womanly tenderness
that understands everything
so I may lose myself in you
and forget my loss.

If you were here, I would tell you this secret.
But you would need to be staring up at the stars
when I told you, held within my arms
feeling the earth rise up beneath you like a holy bed.
You would need our union to be your ears.



Warm Presence

(Chamber 22)

I once wore an amulet
that guarded against the forceps of humanity.
It kept at bay the phalanx of wolves
that circled me like phantoms of Gethsemane.
Phantoms that even now
replay their mantra like conch shells.
Coaxing me to step out and join the earthly tribe.
To bare my sorrow's spaciousness
like a cottonwood's seed to the wind.

Now I listen and watch for signals.
To emerge a recluse squinting in ambivalence
inscribed to tell what has been held by locks.
It is all devised in the sheath of cable
that connects us to Culture.
The single, black strand that portrays us to God.
The DNA that commands our image
and guides our natural selection of jeans.

Are there whispers of songs flickering
in dark, ominous thunder?
Is there truly a sun behind this wall of monotone clouds
that beats a billion hammers of light?
There are small, flat teeth that weep venom.
There is an inviolate clemency
in the eyes of executioners while their hands toil to kill.
But there is no explanation for
voyeur saints who grieve only with their eyes.
There is only one path to follow
when you connect your hand and eye
and release the phantoms.

This poem is a shadow of my heart
and my heart the shadow of my mind,
which is the shadow of my soul
the shadow of God.
God, a shadow of some unknown, unimaginable
cluster of intelligence where galaxies
are cellular in the universal body.
Are the shadows connected?
Can this vast, unknown cluster reach into this poem



and assemble words that couple at a holy junction?
It is the reason I write.
Though I cannot say this junction has ever
been found (at least by me).

It is more apparent that some unholy hand,
pale from darkness, reaches out and casts its sorrow.
Some lesser shadow or phantom
positions my hand in a lonely outpost
to claim some misplaced luminance.
The phantom strains to listen for songs as they whisper.
It coordinates with searching eyes.
It peels skin away to touch the soft fruit.
It welds shadows as one.

I dreamed that I found a ransom note written in God's own hand.
Written so small I could barely read its message, which said:
"I have your soul, and unless you deliver--in small, unmarked
poems--the sum of your sorrows, you will never see it alive again."

And so I write while something unknown is curling
around me, irresistible to my hand, yet unseen.
More phantoms from Gethsemane who honor
sorrow like professional confessors lost in their despair.
I can reach sunflowers the size of
moonbeams, but I cannot reach the sum of my sorrows.
They elude me like ignescent stars that fall nightly
outside my window.

My soul must be nervous.
The ransom is too much to pay
even for a poet who explores the black strand of Culture.

Years ago I found an
impression--like snow angels--left in tall grass
by some animal, perhaps a deer or bear.
When I touched it I felt the warm presence of life,
not the cold radiation of crop circles.
This warm energy lingers only for a moment
but when it is touched it lasts forever.
And this is my fear: that the sum of my sorrows will last forever
when it is touched, and even though my soul is returned
unharmful, I will remember the cold radiation
and not the warm presence of life.

Now I weep when children sing
and burrow their warm presence into my heart.
Now I feel God adjourned by the
source of shadows.
Now I feel the pull of a bridle,
breaking me like a wild horse turned
suddenly submissive.

I cannot fight the phantoms
or control them or turn them away.
They prod at me as if a lava stream should
continue on into the cold night air
and never tire of movement.
Never cease its search for the perfect place to be a sculpture.
An anonymous feature of the gray landscape.

If ever I find the sum of my sorrows
I hope it is at the bridgetower where I can see both ways
before I cross over.
Where I can see forgeries like a crisp mirage
and throw off my bridle.
I will need to be wild when I face it.
I will need to look into its unnameable light and unravel
all the shadows interlocked like paper dolls
and cut from a multiverse of experience.
To let them surround me
and in one resounding chorus confer their epiphany so I
can hand over the ransom and reclaim my soul.

When all my sorrows are gathered round
in an unbroken ring I will stare them down.
Behind them waits a second ring,
larger still and far more powerful.
It is the ring of life's warm presence
when sorrows have passed underneath the shadows' source
and transform like the dull chrysalis
that bears iridescent angels.

WingMakers

(Chamber 12)

I am destined to sit on the riverbank
awaiting words from the naked trees
and brittle flowers that have lost their nectar.
A thousand unblinking eyes
stare out across the water
from the other side.
Their mute voices seek rewards of another kind.
Their demure smiles leave me hollow.

Am I a perpetual stranger to myself?
(The thought brands me numb.)
Am I an orphan trailing pale shadows
that lead to a contemptuous mirror?
Where are these gossamer wings that my
destiny foretold?
I am waiting for the river to deliver them to me;
to lodge them on the embankment
at my feet.

My feet are shackles from another time.
My head, a window long closed
to another place.
Yet, there are places
that salvage the exquisite tongue
and assemble her wild light
like singing birds the sun.
I have seen these places among the stillness
of the other side.
Calling like a lover's kiss
to know again what I have known before;
to reach into the Harvest
and leave my welcome.

These thoughts are folded so neatly
they stare like glass eyes fondling the past.
I listen for their guidance
but serpentine fields are my pathway.
When I look into the dark winds
of the virtual heart
I can hear its voice saying:
"Why are you trapped with wings?"



And I feel like a grand vision inscribed in sand
awaiting an endless wind.

Will these wings take me
beneath the deepest camouflage?
Will they unmask the secret measures
and faithful dwellings of time?
Will they search out the infinite spaces
for the one who can define me?

Wings are forgotten by all who travel with their feet.
Lines have been drawn so many times
that we seldom see the crossing
of our loss though we feel the loss of our crossing.
We sense the undertow of clouds.
The gravity of sky.
The painless endeavor of hope's silent prayers.
But our wings shorn of flight
leave us like newborn rivers that babble over rocks
yearning for the depths of a silent sea.

I have found myself suddenly old.
Like the blackbirds that pour
from the horizon line,
my life has soared over this river searching for my wings.
There is no other key for me to turn.
There is no other legend for me to face.
Talking to flowers and gnarled trees
will only move me a step away—
when I really want to press my face against the windowpane
and watch the wing makers craft my wings.



The End