

Unflinching

Face forward,
Like unflinching robots,
We listen to mechanical steps
One-two, one-two
Sloping the uphill incline.

A bleak path,
No flowers basking in the late afternoon sun.
No melodic stream
For tired, blistered feet,
No hidden ponds
Reflecting determined faces.

As it gets darker
Our momentum increases,
The pair of footsteps just behind
Echoes on the nearly deserted trail,
Trying to keep up.

I barely catch a glimpse of other forms ahead
Seeking the path from a different direction.

It's the dream we pursue, after all,
A mental image,
Like a black and white photograph etched inside.

Will we reach our desire
At the top of the hill?
The path looks straight enough,
But is it a labyrinth in disguise?
Or will we break through, buoyant
Into the cumulus filled sky?

Harvest Coming

Above, the desert skyline,
Slices of crimson infuse clouds,
Announce a new season.

Determined to see harvest,
I plant handfuls,
Blanketing the garden with tiny seeds.

Weeks later,
Small leafy shoots
Forge their way effortlessly
To prominence,
A company of strength,
A dizzy kaleidoscope of hues,
Wedged beneath a flowering hedge.

I untangle words.

They penetrate hard ground,
Flow between inflexible roots,
Resilient granite,
Finding designated places.

A cluster of sensations,
Coherent images,
Lopsided feelings,
Invasive truths,
At times, faintly prophetic,
Break the surface.

Fruits of labor.

Sleepless

Silence is gray at night,

Not piercing,
But not completely still either.

Tonight,
I review a list of potential culprits:
 The penetration of a mysterious new light
 Intruding through the window shade,
 A wayward insect alighting on my arm
 For a midnight snack,
 A lopsided pillow defiantly
 Crimping my neck,
 Or maybe a malevolent dream
 Stalking my subconscious.
I rehearse likely causes like most count sheep.
When I reach 100, I'm wide awake.

I move on to a different strategy,
Remind myself that good sleeping genes
Abound in my family!
Then yawning, I roll over,
Watching the second hand orbit *ad infinitum*,
Listening to its snail-like patter.

Suddenly a new personality enters the room,

Carrying a suitcase of premonitions,
Lost keys and appliances left running,
Memory lapses at critical junctions,
Nodding out while driving, working,
Talking to the boss,
Nightmarish visions of a body ill-prepared
To cope with tomorrow.

The Shadow

Closer than love,
You awake early in step with me
Laying claim to my footsteps.

You crave the sun,
But clothe yourself in darkness.
I can only catch a momentary glimpse.

You insist on my company,
Expectant, even hopeful
That I will move in straight lines.

You're my other,
A being without title, purpose, schedule,
Knowing all my idiosyncrasies.

You're a domesticated animal
Obediently following close behind
Wagging its invisible tail in delight,

Then suddenly you become a wild creature of gigantic proportions
Or easily shrink to the size of a delicate porcelain figure,
Becoming almost selfless.

At evening's dimming,
You break up with me
Until the morning light resonates

Through the arcadia door.
I turn around just in time to see
Your face adorning my bedroom wall.

Writer's Block

My writing session stretches and yawns,
Nothing bubbles to the surface.

Left-brain day
Calculating income taxes,
Squinting at small print,
Insoluble rules demanding
Two or three readings
For minimal comprehension.

Later, the aroma of coffee
Massages my brain,
Attempting to jump-start the right lobe,
Source of flowing verbiage,
Unique images
Portraying the mundane in a novel way.
I don't know if it will work.

Attentive and patient,
I eavesdrop and people watch,
Hunting an *almost* elusive prey.
Outside, monsoon clouds cluster together,
A grey embrace,
Misting the window pane,

Blurring the traffic,
Slowing in regimented long lines
Like my thoughts.