

As I wait

Outside, a pine tree
quivers
as if a hand has stopped caressing
deep inside its bark

and suddenly remembers
somewhere else---

Now the distance
up against my window---

the air you breathed
a month ago
before.

I leave Hawaii in 5 days

Small sparrows flicker within
the high brush of the mountain.

I sit inside the East West Center lounge
half caught on the outside branches, half
leaning down
where the carp roam in the garden pools.

I have never seen the hills so clear. The leaves
so tight in the sun.
The shadows pushed back
so far against the mountainside.

Inside me, a dragonfly
dips off and on
sipping the slow water of my passing.

The Spiritual Practice

Sleep is
spiritual practice
for dying.

We lie prone on our bed
as moonlight
squares our window

and leans against our breasts
with flat, white hands.

Our lungs rise and fall
in the tide of fatigue

as dreams begin to wash
against our eyelids
like stellar jays strutting on the branches
of outstretched arms.

We let go
of pain hanging
like used clothes in our closet.

We strip down our day
to one naked breath
caressing the darkness
that blankets our body.

We stop trying to fix broken moments
or the mirrors of our age.

We dance on the water
of the night

and

ease our pillow beyond
the line of sight
where feathers fall behind the sinking sun.

To Bow

On the wind of the leaf in the snow,
the oak will bow to the leaf,
the wind will bow to the mountains.
If we, as people, can bow to the wrinkle of fire,

the oak will bow to the leaf
on the skin of a river at dusk.
If we, as people, can bow to the wrinkle of fire,
then the planet will bow to our soul,

on the skin of a river at dusk,
and our soul will know.
Then the planet will bow to our soul
when our God has danced.

And our soul will know,
the wind will bow to the mountains,
when our God has danced
on the wind of a leaf in the snow.

Dun Aonghasa (Aran Islands, Ireland)

Stark-haired goats
forage among the grass tufts
from rain holes
in the rock.

The waves of the Northern Sea
thrash their bodies and tails
against the cliffs of Dun Aonghasa

and

waves whitewash
the rock faces,
splattering spray
like wet and wild horses.

The stone fort watches
fiercely over the land
with a sacred stare
thousands of years old.

No windows but the grey frame
of the sea.

No ceiling but the charcoal-dusted clouds
drifting endlessly by,

and

on the stone altar,
a human silence
sits

offering the power
of moving grass.

You join to the God
of history
through the stones
unmoved

yet vibrating across time
with a thick tongue:

One stone speaks. One stone listens.

While the rising moon, milked
by the stars,

half-smiles,

half-blinded
by the sky.