SIXFOLD POEMS

CONCIENCE

A promise made but kept in the mind as something to be done soon, is broken. Time went by invisibly, now it's too late, the lights are still shining but the doors are closed and you're alone with the ghost of your heart -felt intentions. Excuses present themselves. They make you a victim of overwhelm and you think they will soften the child's disappointment but they don't explain why you meant what you said but forgot. All the way back to work you grapple with this bad faith which has changed who you thought you were to someone who squirms in his skin.

CHANGING PARTNERS

He brings her flowers, pinched from the widow's window box, takes her away from her books, her thoughts, to walk in the city at night when the streets are slick with rain, streaking, blurring lights from the shops, the chic bars, the traffic, the fountains.

She cannot hold him. His face breaks and slides away in her dreams. He appears without warning, sweeps her up in his brief obsessions. When he leaves there is the pulse of an absent bell, a space aching with promise.

She believes he will grow thin in the waste beyond her inexhaustible yes, will come home to rest, and stay... until his carelessness outlasts her patience and she sleeps with a man who calls her twice a day and stays overnight on weekends.

NIGHT MUSIC

I'm standing by the window, but I'm not watching the sparse traffic or birds in the overcast. I'm listening. Deep in the onshore weather a siren's hot wire squirms through the rain.

Someone's trying to outrun his fear of handcuffs, jail time; or someone has lost control of his own body and needs to be rushed through the speed limit, through the fear of death to the place where the antiseptic light is all he can see of tomorrow, and the last act of the opera that's playing upstairs builds to a final chorus through harmonies so tight they weave the singers into the song.

'ROUND ABOUT MIDNIGHT

The clock ticks off quick, metallic heartbeats. I remember her eyes, my arm around his shoulders, passionate talk, whisky straight through the night.

She pounded my door till I woke up.
She had missed her period
again, and we were friends. What
about the father? He doesn't know, he's
gone. A few weeks later she bled
herself to death in a closet.

"Come to New York," he said,
"We'll write that book." My first
day in the city, a friend called
from Poughkeepsie. "It's Grandin.
They found him this morning."
Naked, an empty vial on the desk,
his head on his arms,
his arms crossed on the Smith-Corona,
and all the plugs pulled in the brightening room.

A train whistle pierces the dark. I put on my coat and walk out toward the bridge. The moon

breaks

from tangled branches and sails out into a sea of stars. Somewhere, from one of the houses, a saxophone threads the ancient labyrinth of grief.

CINEMA VERITÉ

The moon rises from a jagged silhouette of date palms.

Every shadow is a door.

There's a cave in the cliff where the only sound is water and its echo, entering the silence of millennia one drop at a time, as blind fish dart like knives of ice in a dark mirror.

The sun rises over the date palms.

How different they seem.

Though the mind can run backward, time cannot.