

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.

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.