

Outbound – Five Poems after Grief

THEY

There is no limp when they walk,
no cast or brace to shore up
their wounded souls.

No scar, no mark to trace
the change, the primal shift
when you were torn away.

But there is this -
fault lines have settled in,
where cares before unknown
trace patterns of sorrow.
Fragile shells now easily broken.

And this - hands open, still releasing,
hearts swelled,
still longing for hope to be enough.

WE

We have let go.
You asked us, each one,
to loosen our grip,
to love enough to release a soul to you.
We have let go.

But see,
our open hands,
ready for what
You promised.

See, our upturned faces.

ROSARY

I still can see his
footprints in the white expanse of snow
that lies between the shore and the island.

For a bird riding
the north wind,
this trail must resemble the
beads on a string,
a rosary;

even,
measured,
a circle around the tiny ledges
and back to land.

How could one know if
each step was weighted
with cares
that pressed him against the ice,
or threatened to stop him in his tracks.

Perhaps,
as a rosary,
each one was a prayer
lifted and held up,

every move a cry for grace,
a march in the twilight of the world,
to find where the light is best.

What I see is a steadfast path
that led away,
and then,
returned
to home again.

MARY

She wears her heart on her sleeve.

No one need ever wonder if she loves them,
for she loves them all.

Like the widow's oil, it flows on
and you don't know
how
or why,
or where it ends.

For she pours it out –
lavish love that observes
no exception, no exemption.

You see it soaking them and
wonder at her reckless expenditures.

The heart, you think, should be
measured out with care,
held in trust for the right ones,
protected.

Then –

You fall into the current of her affections
and you know how right it is
to have such love –

Unmeasured,
unguarded,
unfettered.

THE TAI CHI OF PLUMBING

Still...

my record stands,
a woodsman of skill, endurance, speed...vigor.
Muscles that would not
give out,
power in my legs
like pistons,
my back a machine,
never faltering.

So I amazed them,
an old man, up a tree
bringing it down
foot by foot,
and inside I
laugh.

But now...

muscles unraveled as old elastic,
weak as watery tea.
This back that no longer
holds up my useless weight,
unable, even,
to manage the tai chi of plumbing.

So... I must need...must ask for
help.

And inside I
rage.