

we will and will not do for love. Sometimes what's  
miraculous is what's most purely human. That morning  
the old man turned away from promises of a perfect world  
in favour of one whose flaws could not obscure  
its simplest joys~the small warmth of the boy's hand  
on his father's breast, tender flesh perfumed with  
sweat and sunlight, how the caged bird of his heart  
beat fiercely in its mortal keep, the single shadow  
their bodies pushed across fallow ground, even the  
remnant fear which saw them free a ram tangled in thicket,  
cast it upon unbloodied stone, its mild eyes rolling  
white as fire unteased its matted fleece, burnished  
each cracked hoof and spiralled horn, gave it black  
wings with which to fly to a heaven blacker still.

### LIKE WATER

which cannot break its  
contract with earth, the  
immortal rising and falling,  
shreds of mist  
called home by sunlight,  
thunderclouds torn asunder  
in wind, or the way, before  
rain, air smells like  
jars of bright pennies and  
the need to be spent.  
What lives holds its breath  
until the sky opens like  
hands unfolded in prayer, or  
answered prayer, and each

leaf flickers its small flame  
like a concert hall  
filled with longing for one  
more melody before the  
shroud of silence falls.

Something ephemeral takes  
on a form bound by time,  
descends in clean water~  
the kind we imagine soft  
in pails or catching light  
on the silk muzzles of horses.

Last summer, in a cemetery  
we thought belonged to no one  
but us, rain shawled your  
bare shoulders as you lay  
under me. Solstice: the year's  
longest day. And what we made  
with those extra glimmers  
of fugitive light was room for  
a little more love. We'd no  
regard for the eyes of grave  
angels or, finally, the woman  
wrapped in grief who braved  
the weather to lay a single  
red rose against a stone cross  
woven with garlands of sinuous  
vine. The body has its hard  
lessons as well as sweet, and she,  
like us, was learning, her  
gnarled hands pressed to wet  
grass, my ear against the  
thunder of your heartbeat, an  
echo of watches which kept  
dark time against a hundred quiet  
wrists beneath us.

Tonight, someone you loved is  
gone, her blood having turned  
against itself like a black  
tide. And what can I tell you  
except that I believe the  
simple lesson of rain~nothing's  
ever taken which isn't given  
back? Let me be that solstice  
storm again for you. Let the  
dinner you made be forgotten, and  
its elaborate settings; salmon  
roses going soft in their crystal  
vase, candles guttering  
against brass followers. Let me  
move past the breathy curtains  
filled like sails, beyond your pale  
dress disregarded on a chair,  
over sheets spilled across parquet  
like the frothing mouth of a  
river. I want to be like water  
which moves beneath and  
above you, like the fist-sized purse  
which cushions your heart,  
the damp between your thighs, or  
the first warm shower which  
falls in spring, knocking against  
cold earth as if to say there is  
no distance great enough. Or small.  
No distance that can still  
blossoms which stir in sepulchral dark.