

GRAVEDIGGERS' STRIKE  
New York, 1973

Don't worry about my body.

While the gravedigger walks in front of the gates  
with one gold earring  
and a sign, *Unfair*,

you can give my eyes to the eye bank,  
and my heart and my liver  
to the heart bank and the liver bank,  
and whatever skin, bone, hair can be used  
by those in need  
of worn-out skin and hair.

The scars don't matter. The part  
that I've been searching for, these years,  
in the discarded heaps of fallen hair  
and sloughed-off skin  
and dim memories  
and forgotten dreams  
will be gone by then.

Do I hurt your cause, gravedigger?  
My death follows the pattern of my life.

AFTER CHAGALL

Lady, your head is on upside down.  
What do you see?

I see a chair, waving its legs.  
I see a bird's back.  
I see sunflowers standing on their faces  
holding up the world.

Here I am, floating through the sky  
with my head on wrong  
so that my hair tickles my neck  
and my chin sticks up,  
and the lovers kissing in the garden  
look comical, their feet straining  
to touch the ground.  
It's been a long time since someone  
kissed me in the garden.  
My mouth's up too high.

I get confused, floating around this way,  
and can't always remember if I'm a woman  
or a bird. Birds don't kiss at all.

I see a house falling on a man  
sitting near the chimney with a fiddle in his hand.  
The man and the house are falling straight at me.  
But I'm not worried.  
Even though I look at trees  
and houses and fiddles and gardens  
in a strange, circular way,  
I know that up is up and down is down.

It's just that I can't seem to get down  
and nothing ever comes up  
except a bird, sometimes,  
(who doesn't count, because  
I'm really a woman).

If I can't reach the garden, I'd like  
at least to get to the roof, and sit  
and listen to the fiddle.  
I'm not asking for kisses,  
just a roof under my feet.