

HOLY CITY

Because it has sunk so low
like loss, like big loss
Because my heart heaves
in its 26 year old breast
& spirit broken like an arrow
under the immense tear
whose power, sorrow, expands
in all directions all the time
Because it's tired & staked out
& no amends to fill the duty
& no windows to see the result
forget itself & climb down
from a bastion of steel
or slip cautiously from a cake of cement
Because your friends are as distant
as stars from the street
& your lover sighs & goes to sleep
leaving you, the dreamer, to the untender mercy
of the clock, dirty dawn, job,
school report, speeding ticket
all rushing forward
to trip you up
as you sidestep the ledge
& that ledge is a clean line
straight to the end
over & over again
making the same mistake
though you pinpoint it
track it down
& wipe your target clean
They'll still trip you up
Because it's not architecture
or instinct or cultivation
or the last word or the tops
or justice or the right of way
or extra fine quality or cheap
or even reasonable
Because the rain is as classical as ever
the people sleep late & grumble
the traffic stalls & monsters your breath
& money talks & money screams & tortures you
& maniacs grab at your pocketbook
& grope your ass

& the best poet in town packs a gun
Because there's no way
back or out just a tighter & tighter squeeze
with junk to drown your sadness
& junk to wire your madness
Because you feel imminent death all the time
though I'm not afraid no I'm not afraid
Because it's throwing a bright idea straight to hell
& becoming the slow & patient destruction
of all you ever wanted to do.

Anne Waldman

FARM WIFE

Dark as the spring river, the earth
opens each damp row as the farmer
swings the far side of the field.
The blackbirds flash their red
wing patches and wheel in his wake,
down to the black dirt; the windmill
grinds in its chain rig and tower.

In the kitchen, his wife is baking.
She stands in the door in her long white
gloves of flour. She cocks her head and
tries to remember, turns like the moon
toward the sea-black field. Her belly
is rising, her apron fills like a sail.
She is gliding now, the windmill churns
beneath her, she passes the farmer,
the fine map of the furrows.
The neighbors point to the bone-white
spot in the sky.

Let her float
like a fat gull that swoops and circles,
before her husband comes in for supper,
before her children grow up and leave her,
before the pulley cranks her down
the dark shaft, and the church blesses
her stone bed, and the earth seals
its black mouth like a scar.