

THE PREMONITION

Walking this field I remember
Days of another summer.
Oh that was long ago! I kept
Close to the heels of my father,
Matching his stride with half-steps
Until we came to a river.
He dipped his hand in the shallow;
Water ran over and under
Hair on a narrow wrist bone;
His image kept following after, -
Flashed with the sun in the ripple.
But when he stood up, that face
Was lost in a maze of water.

MID-COUNTRY BLOW

All night and all day the wind roared in the trees,
Until I could think there were waves rolling high as my bedroom floor;
When I stood at the window, an elm bough swept to my knees;
The blue spruce lashed like a surf at the door.

The second dawn I would not have believed:
The oak stood with each leaf stiff as a bell.
When I looked at the altered scene, my eye was undeceived,
But my ear still kept the sound of the sea like a shell.

THE BAT

By day the bat is cousin to the mouse.
He likes the attic of an aging house.

His fingers make a hat about his head.
His pulse beat is so slow we think him dead.

He loops in crazy figures half the night
Among the trees that face the corner light.

But when he brushes up against a screen,
We are afraid of what our eyes have seen:

For something is amiss or out of place
When mice with wings can wear a human face.

NIGHT JOURNEY

Now as the train bears west,
Its rhythm rocks the earth,
And from my Pullman berth
I stare into the night
While others take their rest.
Bridges of iron lace,
A suddenness of trees,
A lap of mountain mist
All cross my line of sight,
Then a bleak wasted place,
And a lake below my knees.
Full on my neck I feel
The straining at a curve;
My muscles move with steel,
I wake in every nerve.
I watch a beacon swing
From dark to blazing bright;
We thunder through ravines
And gullies washed with light.
Beyond the mountain pass
Mist deepens on the pane;
We rush into a rain
That rattles double glass.
Wheels shake the roadbed stone,
The pistons jerk and shove,
I stay up half the night
To see the land I love.

VERNAL SENTIMENT

Though the crocuses poke up their heads in the usual places,
The frog scum appear on the pond with the same froth of green,
And boys moon at girls with last year's fatuous faces,
I never am bored, however familiar the scene.

When from under the barn the cat brings a similar litter,
Two yellow and black, and one that looks in between,
Though it all happened before, I cannot grow bitter:
I rejoice in the spring, as though no spring ever had been.

IDYLL

Now as from maple to elm the flittermice skitter and twirl,
A drunk man stumbles by, absorbed in self-talk.
The lights in the kitchens go out; moth wings unfurl;
The last tricycle runs crazily to the end of the walk.

As darkness creeps up on the well-groomed suburban town,
We grow indifferent to dog howls, to the nestling's last peep;
Dew deepens on the fresh-cut lawn;
We sit in the porch swing, content and half asleep.

The world recedes in the black revolving shadow;
A far-off train blows its echoing whistle once;
We go to our beds in a house at the edge of a meadow,
Unmindful of terror and headlines, of speeches and guns.

THE SUMMONS

Now all who love the best,
Old and rebellious young,
Must contemplate the waste
Of countenancing wrong:
The human mired, the brute
Raised up to eminence,
The mimic following suit
Until devoid of sense.
The good becoming gross,
All this we may discern;
By slow degrees we learn
The full extent of loss.

Though the small wit we have
May nullify belief,
The simple act can save
The heritage of life.
With secrecy put by,
The heart grows less obtuse,
And fervency of eye
Is put to better use.
The impulse long denied,
The lips that never move,
The hatred and the pride,
These can be turned to love.
Now we must summon all
Our force, from breadth to length,
And walk, more vertical,
Secure in human strength.