

TWO HANDS

From the sea came a hand,
ignorant as a penny,
troubled with the salt of its mother,
mute with the silence of the fishes,
quick with the altars of its tides,
and God reached out of His mouth
and called it man.

Up came the other hand
and God called it woman.

The hands applauded.

And this was no sin.

It was as it was meant to be.

I see them roaming the streets:
Levi complaining about his mattress,
Sarah studying a beetle,
Mandrake holding his coffee mug,
Sally playing the drum at a football game,
John closing the eyes of the dying woman,
and some who are in prison,
even the prison of their bodies,
as Christ was prisoned in His body
until the triumph came.

Unwind, hands,
your angel webs,
unwind like the coil of a jumping jack,
cup together and let yourselves fill up with sun
and applaud, world,
applaud.

WELCOME MORNING

There is joy
in all:
in the hair I brush each morning,
in the Cannon towel, newly washed,
that I rub my body with each morning,
in the chapel of eggs I cook
each morning,
in the outcry from the kettle
that heats my coffee
each morning,
in the spoon and the chair
that cry "hello there, Anne"
each morning,
in the godhead of the table
that I set my silver, plate, cup upon
each morning.

All this is God,
right here in my pea-green house
each morning
and I mean,
though often forget,
to give thanks,
to faint down by the kitchen table
in a prayer of rejoicing
as the holy birds at the kitchen window
peck into their marriage of seeds.

So while I think of it,
let me paint a thank-you on my palm
for this God, this laughter of the morning,
lest it go unspoken.

The Joy that isn't shared, I've heard,
dies young.

WHAT THE BIRD WITH THE HUMAN HEAD KNEW

I went to the bird
with the human head,
and asked,
Please Sir,
where is God?

God is too busy
to be here on earth,
His angels are like one thousand geese assembled
and always flapping.
But I can tell you where the well of God is.

Is it on earth?
I asked.
He replied,
Yes. It was dragged down
from paradise by one of the geese.

I walked many days,
past witches that eat grandmothers knitting booties
as if they were collecting a debt.
Then, in the middle of the desert
I found the well,
it bubbled up and down like a litter of cats
and there was water,
and I drank,
and there was water,

and I drank.

Then the well spoke to me.

It said: Abundance is scooped from abundance,
yet abundance remains.

Then I knew.

SNOW

Snow,
blessed snow,
comes out of the sky
like bleached flies.
The ground is no longer naked.
The ground has on its clothes.
The trees poke out of sheets
and each branch wears the sock of God.

There is hope.
There is hope everywhere.
I bite it.
Someone once said:
Don't bite till you know
if it's bread or stone.
What I bite is all bread,
rising, yeasty as a cloud.

There is hope.
There is hope everywhere.
Today God gives milk
and I have the pail.

NOT SO, NOT SO

(Look to Your Heart)

I cannot walk an inch
without trying to walk to God.
I cannot move a finger
without trying to touch God.

Perhaps it is this way:
He is in the graves of the horses.
He is in the swarm, the frenzy of the bees.
He is in the tailor mending my pantsuit.
He is in Boston, raised up by the skyscrapers.
He is in the bird, that shameless flyer.
He is in the potter who makes clay into a kiss.

Heaven replies:
Not so! Not so!

I say thus and thus
and heaven smashes my words.

Is not God in the hiss of the river?

Not so! Not so!

Is not God in the ant heap,
stepping, clutching, dying, being born?

Not so! Not so!

Where then?
I cannot move an inch.
Look to your heart
that flutters in and out like a moth.
God is not indifferent to your need.
You have a thousand prayers
but God has one.