

Poems used in the choral cycle *Songs for Women's Voices* (1992)

Poetry by May Swenson (1913-1989)

Music by Gwyneth Walker

(original titles of the poems are in square brackets)

Permission for the use of the poetry has been granted by the estate of May Swenson.

Women Should Be Pedestals [Women]

Women should be pedestals
moving pedestals
moving to the motions of men

Or they should be little horses
those wooden sweet oldfashioned painted rocking horses
the gladdest things in the toyroom

The pegs of their ears
so familiar and dear
to the trusting fists

To be chafed feelingly
and then unfeelingly

To be joyfully ridden
rockingly ridden
until the restored egos dismount
and the legs stride away

Immobile
sweetlipped
sturdy and smiling
women should always be waiting
willing to be set in motion

Women should be pedestals
to men

Mornings Innocent

I wear your smile upon my lips
Arising on mornings innocent
Your laughter overflows my throat
Your skin is a fleece about me
With your princely walk I salute the sun
People say I am handsome

Arising on mornings innocent
birds make the sound of kisses
Leaves flicker dark and light like eyes

I melt beneath the magnet of your gaze
Your husky breath embraces my ear
Alert and fresh as grass I wake
and rise on mornings innocent.

The Name is Changeless [God]

They said there was a Thing that could not Change
They could not Find it
so they Named it God
They had to Search
so then it must be There
It had a Name
it must exist Somewhere

The Name was God
the Thing that could not Change

They could not Find it
What is Lost is God
They had to Search for what could not be Found
What cannot be Found is Changeless
It is God
The Name is clue
the Thing is Lost somewhere
They Found the Name
The Name is Changeless
God

Love Is a Rain of Diamonds

Love is a rain of diamonds in the mind
the fruit of the soul sliced in two
a dark spring loosed at the lips of light
under-earth waters unlocked from their lurking
to sparkle in a crevice parted by the sun
a temple not of stone but cloud
beyond the roar of the heart and all violence
blue permanence

In Autumn

[I Will Lie Down]

I will lie down in autumn
let birds be flying
Swept in a hollow by the wind
I'll wait for dying
I will lie inert unseen
my hair same-colored with grass and leaves
Gather me for the autumn fires
with the withered sheaves
I will sleep face down in the burnt meadow
not hearing the sound of water over stones
Trail over me cloud and shadow
Let snow hide the whiteness of my bones

I Will Be Earth

I will be earth, you be the flower,
You have found my root, you are the rain.
I will be boat, and you the rower.
You rock me and toss me, you are the sea.

How be steady earth that is now a flood.
The root is the oar afloat where has blown our bud.
We will be desert, pure salt the seed.
Burn radiant love, born scorpion need.