

INNER / OUTER

I

In ninety-six, I read my Christmas books.
Pagels' inference from Eve compares
Aurelius, depressed quite often, hooked
by duty, destiny, the grave affairs
of those fate calls to greatness, golden heirs
on a forced march downward to the tomb in tune
with Pomp and Circumstance – unlike the prayers
that broke the back of ancient logic, runes
enchanting to the poor, the doomed, and those rough-hewn

II

by suffering, exulting in the soul's
equality and everlasting life.
And Gordimer's heroes, longing to be whole
and crossed by history, must grope through its strife
for balance in a crooked world, for a life
of one's own between the Dutchman and his victim.
Someone I know became a priest and wife
and scientist, resolving worlds of dictum
in herself; in Gordimer's phrase, she lives through the skin.