

NO PLACE LIKE HOME
(an old-fashioned dialogue between Self and Soul)

SELF (alto voice):

Lucky traveler, romanced by the road,
the old home can't get me with its load
of traps for a garden, stinking nets
spread across the threshold: hard abode,
petrified by bitter mist and bowed
like wood bleached by flood and set
down like salted bones. At least, I'm told
one house, mean and cheap, stays on the cold
market for a housewife yet.

CHORUS:

One day, a half a century later, dressed
in rags and leaning on a stick, distressed
soul returns disguised as a crone
and finds the highway come to the house, now pressed
against that driftwood pitched on shingle, messed
by fumes, tormented by crossroad's groan.

And the spirit sang as jaws of death ingressed
to shear away the face, a monstrous guest,
and leave a dollhouse or geode stone,
split to bare its passages to flow
of traffic, its hearths and scenes of private woe,
its thresholds crossed by proud brides.

SOUL (treble voice):

Rooms that holding birth and death would know,
can count the loves and selves lost by cockcrow,
won by nightfall. Because of tides
that guide our times, row or mow or sew,
sticks and rags are our lives, and tiny clothes
in the attic. You who left its side
are part of its story along with those who died.
It is good to live in a house, long, long to bide
its time. The grizzled children know
that it will be there always, if laid by,
dismantled by loving hands that testify
to work of nature that goes slow,
not beaten to obscurity. As I

might put it, "Since our time began to fly,
we've always lived at The Landing, though
we had to rebuild."

SELF AND SOUL (duet):

Who are they to blow
away the rock wrought those years ago
by fire and ice and crush the pride
of a neighborhood that grew like flocks that ride
the civil air together, packs that stride
ancestral freeholds? Hand of Hun,
come out of nowhere as wheel of fortune spun,
set plastic mammoths on asphalt plain to stun
the soul, undifferentiated
death, deformed organ to incubate
'non-natural persons.' Those who stay and wait
are homesick for where they are, and those
who left now come from nowhere. To this gross
rebirth, can nature bring a spirit? Close
by fieldlark's fluid tongue, will still
she find a holy voice to bless, distill
her rainbow rain, sifting crystal spills
of sound all over this black hole's kill?