

VOICES IN THE WIND

Laurence Hutchman

A Thesis  
in  
The Department  
of  
English

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts at  
Concordia University  
Montreal, Québec, Canada

August 1979

© Laurence Hutchman, 1979

ABSTRACT

VOICES IN THE WIND

Laurence Hutchman

This thesis is a collection of poems divided into three sections: "Return," "Garden of Words" and "The Mountain." In these poems I am concerned with the aspects of the return to origins in people, place and language.

The first section, "Return," is a personal exploration of origins mainly in Ireland and Holland. Poems such as "Return" and "The Garden" are narrative expressions of psychic rootspace.

In the "Garden of Words" I use numerous forms to explore the nature of exile: the narrative poem evokes the various tableaux of the lives of immigrants. Some of the shorter lyrical poems explore metaphors taken from nature.

In the final section, "The Mountain," I endeavour, especially in "Nelligan" and "The Mountain," to fuse the lyric and the narrative. In "Voices in the Wind" I have tried for a musical counterpoint, an interplay of voices and tableaux.

Acknowledgements

The Fiddlehead

Prism international

Versus.

Waves

Radio Centreville

## Table of Contents

### Return

Return	2
Saint Columba	11
Three Houses	12
At Baudelaire's Grave	13
The Garden	14
Josie of Flower Street	17
The Old Church	19
Work Camp	20
Herman	21

### Garden of Words

Night View	24
La Tempête	25
You Should Always Carry a Pen	26
The Cabinet Maker	27
High School of Montreal	29
Christina	30
Salmon Run at Streetsville	33
Music in the Snow	34
Girl Walking on Friday Afternoon	35
Pinballs	36
Walk into Autumn	37
Toward Rimouski	38
Midnight Hunger	40
Two Oranges	41
Balcony	42
After the Blizzard	43
Nymphae	44
Silence	45

The Mountain

Spring Winds  
Nelligan  
The Mountain  
Changing Seasons  
Voices in the Wind  
Vigil

47  
48  
53  
56  
57  
61

Return

Return

1

The plane descends  
toward Greenisland's misty

shore, plaid fields of Lilliput;  
a green ridge  
where black memorial  
shadows my birth place.

The castle I climbed  
stairs winding  
to high turrets  
and gazed

upon moon magic.  
Great soldier-uncle  
ran into the surprise

of bullets, leaving  
his name; castle  
on the misty  
sea.

Over the tracks memories click,  
waves break on childhood shores.

We fished from high-cragged rocks  
into the green and swirling waves,

ran in sack races through  
Coronation tents with Dixie cups,

or rode in Portrush bumper cars.  
Nights, the lighthouse beacon

scanned stormy sea. Ancestors  
trekked Europe, carved this railway

through the rock. These ties take us  
back, past castles, ruined villages.



3

The mini revs past checkpoints  
soldiers guard pulpits  
cannons aim  
from siege walls.

Banners flutter  
crowds of '68  
broke through cordons  
spilled blood on cobbles.

Beyond Butcher's Gate  
children are soldiers;  
we wind among the maze  
asylums and schools  
down to the family house,  
Edenmore Street.

Grandmother greets us  
her eyes kindle  
an ageless face.  
she moves  
among relics of anglers  
and soldiers.

Grandfather stares  
out from a relief  
of ships, planes and bombs:  
"For God, King and Country."  
Sparks explode in the hearth.

5  
Christmas, father and I  
wound along the lanes  
to Glasgow house  
where Emily stoked  
stories of old men

her face now  
carved in leather;  
she laments a turncoat  
brother, catholic bullets  
sizzling nightly  
through her garden.

4

Down the border road  
 beyond the guarded customs  
 below Griánan's pagan gaze  
 Grandfather cycled  
 by Lough Swilly's windy shore  
 through the time of troubles  
 to meet  
 and marry  
 Sarah.

The beaches at Fahan are quiet  
 where bards composed verses  
 and the Earls bade farewell,  
 so beyond the gaps in rocks,  
 beyond the myths of mermaids  
 and patriots  
 trees stretch their knotted  
 fingers,  
 old men tell their tales  
 to the sun-struck stage.

We trace the route  
 through collage of rock and tree;  
 smoke drifts across an Apache trail.  
 Down on the beach  
 a dragon whirls its iron rotors  
 and children gather  
 under its foreign dominion.  
 Soldiers with dogs  
 climb the rocky slope  
 searching.

Most northern point  
 over the hill  
 vast glimmering sea,  
 Malin Head:  
 a woman frozen  
 in the wind's imminence  
 jewels spangle  
 on her wild water.

Out there  
 esprit démon,  
 the moving rocks  
 and you talk of riots,  
 marriage and massacre.

The waves scrape the pebbled  
 beach:

I descend to water  
 venture rock by rock  
 tempt the tide,  
 green water bursting  
 around my suede shoes.

One does not swim here  
 seven years ago  
 a cousin fishing  
 his wife turned  
 he was gone.

One should not venture  
 far on these red rocks  
 bridges disappearing  
 into the sea.

In town the old men  
talk in the eternal politics  
of the square.  
"Aye, he jumped from the cliff"  
the old man says  
tipping his hat.

Mountains outline the crimson dusk,  
wind blows through the luminous reeds,  
sands glimmer against the sea.

Gone are the soldiers,  
gone is the young man.  
Earth gives up her perfect beauty,  
waves break freely on Malin Head.

Bridgend,  
darkness shadows  
the stuccoed house;  
the barn, a crumbling  
monastery.

Bobby Gamble rocks  
before the stove  
through smoke rings  
speaks of a dead wife,  
married daughters and  
fixing up the farm.

"Aye, was out yonder  
th' other night  
and the bullets whistled  
through the leaves  
tho' wasn't a tune  
I cared for."

8

I come back to this library,  
light falls softly on the legend  
of this map: no family name  
recorded on its green lines.  
Emily, Granny and Bobby Gamble  
are my ancestors.

Among these tomes I walk, remember  
the talk of poetry and country:  
from this turret window I  
look upon the divided city.  
I hold the key chain,  
the emblem of the old man  
exiled from his castle.

The barges float on the river,  
smoke rises from red houses.  
Phantom soldiers hunt  
vague enemies of the land.  
Cold wind blows  
through grass and arteries  
of stone.

## Saint Columba

Exiled by clerics you turn  
from the green pained hills  
where your oak grew in the nourishing mist:  
God's design is the raven's flight  
high beyond Grianan's pagan walls,  
so the hand of God guides you  
along the craggy shores of Inishowen  
and the devil's currents lash your bark.

Your destiny a shining lamp,  
your words rise through mist.  
You guide the coracle  
out of Lough Foyle into the Irish Sea.  
Anger distills in your bitter heart.

Your laws are strict in a time of darkness  
when barbarian hordes ride  
to Europe's edge: you keep  
the lamp burning low as you write sacred scrolls  
and council your secular monks  
to watch for the sign of the injured bird.

And could you, Columba, return now  
to your oak grove, see how the clerics  
and those bitter men of politics  
have armed the population; this absolute love  
transfixed in the murderer's eye.



## Three Houses

Near this country's border  
white road winds among green hills.  
A thatched cottage is joined to a larger house.  
The gardener digs in his garden,  
ravens caw out to the crude Gods,  
water gurgles from a rusty pipe  
bubbling beneath rose-blown petals.

Surgeon's house on the hilltop is  
quiet beyond the trees and holly leaves,  
one night on the Antrim Road  
his son shot dead from a speeding car.  
In-dream river flows through glen.

Old abandoned house  
rusty curtains flutter in a broken frame,  
inside barrels marked with royal lions,  
the bottles of spoiled whiskey,  
a calendar from before the war.  
"Who's coming around the bend?"  
only two cyclists and a whistling boy  
human cries echo in the wind.

## At Baudelaire's Grave

"Où est la tombe de Charles Baudelaire?"  
and the red nosed concierge laughs:

"La troisième pierre à la gauche,"  
jerks his thumb as though  
directing me to a lost neighbour.

Your name engraved  
beneath that of the hated Aupic;  
on a slate petals formed  
by a child into a circle  
or a crown.

And the wind trembles in the leaves.  
What is death?

On the path a black cat  
looks up with green eyes.

In this graveyard  
the old man, the flowers, the cat  
are your symbols  
and there above the graveyard wall  
the marvellous clouds.

The Garden

An early memory, pigeons fluttering  
in a garden cage. The Veldhuisens  
lived in the Hoflaan after the war,  
moon shines over pink blossoms.

And the cinder path winds among the woods,  
we return through this arcade  
(in the Habitant house  
a picture of this park hung)  
across the field the podium angel  
holds the laurel still.

That summer before we came to Canada  
mornings we walked among tents  
where meisjes sold fish  
and old men swallowed herring:  
I twirled a pinwheel  
ate stroomwafels,  
above the town  
the windmill turned.

Mother guided me by the lake  
where swans glided  
past the palace  
and the sphinx-like lions:  
we stepped over the wooden  
arched bridge  
and the angel rose  
in a Bible vision  
her eyes looked upward  
powerful wings spread on the air.

I was twenty when I returned  
After the funeral of Oma  
I stood before the Hoflaan's dark windows  
looked at the gyroscope; Opa sailed  
the Zuider Zee, steered cargoes  
through the wave-swelling night.

So I approach you again  
your wings smudged  
but still that silent grace;  
in these palace gardens  
Wilhelm and his princess  
took their tea.

Along this road the Panzer divisions  
rolled in to occupy the country.

Was it here Herman sneaked out  
gathered firewood

under your watchful eye.

And the V 2's whistled overhead  
destroyed cities in England.

By the pond you and I walk  
parents as lovers hid in the tall grass  
spying Opa and Oma strolling  
in that peace that reigned  
after the war.

They were married in that city hall,  
(that childhood palace) now the mayor  
and his councillors pass by-laws  
under chandeliers; we cross  
the bridge above the sleeping swans.

In that cottage an artist and his wife  
draw the magic of colour on white space  
colour wild as animals and flowers  
drawing a new geometry  
perhaps an image of you

angel: I recall you  
on monuments, graveyards, mountains;  
in mornings before school saw you  
on the Dutch war plaque,  
in Herman's house at dawn  
when the light  
broke through the curtains  
falling on Athena by the fireplace  
broke through the leaves  
into song  
above the milling streets  
of commerce.

At twilight this park a genesis  
as we move through the shadows  
leave the cities in war;  
and night comes rustling  
in the leaves  
and the fountain rises  
mingles with our voices  
breaking into colour  
over the dark water.

## Josie of Flower Street

The seamy room where father drank  
and sisters swarmed around me.  
Mornings the odour of bad meat  
hung in the air. In afternoons  
the sick smell of steam rose  
from filthy clothes.

That night the Dane approached me  
thrusting more gulden into my hand  
than I made in a week at the laundry.  
I bought my first red dress.

When the wind rose  
sea-air drifted back into the city  
and sailors from all over the world  
would come and want me then.  
I was young, tawny  
not those caged birds for tourists.

My leg hurts again. Raining,  
but not as it did that night  
when the car beams blinded me.  
Emergency, the priest, enormous penguin  
blessed with the dangling cross  
digging his fingers into my thighs.

There are not so many men now  
the door-knob creaks in my fingers,  
students' words drift down  
through the smoky light,  
books sailors used to read me.

That morning Jan was longer  
undressing, taking his socks  
off last, digging his fingers  
into my back, trying to get  
hold of something beyond me.  
Then his cheeks flushed red  
as he arched into shock  
and collapsed on my breasts,  
his eyes cold as the room  
around me.

I was in my dressing gown  
when the police came.  
Their blue eyes gazed at me,  
I couldn't answer their simple questions  
just kept smoking, looking down  
into the grave of the garden.

The Old Church

Past cracked red wall  
we edge among gravestones  
of merchants, wives and children.

Dust sparkles  
blossoms tumble  
and birds from the tower  
sing.

In luminous wood  
black sealed bunker

beyond the dyke  
children swim.



## Work Camp


-for Robert Veldhuisen

After the bombing of Rotterdam that was it.  
Next morning Opa and you cycle through  
the flaming streets past streaming refugees.  
There are new laws, Jews vanish,  
an edict summons boys from the villages.  
A girl from city hall warns Oma  
so when they come you are on the soccer field.  
Again they return, the commandant says:  
"You must report to the fatherland."  
One of the soldiers recognizes you from the game  
winks as he leaves the kamer.

All avenues are closed. You have to report.  
On the station platform your family  
is frozen into sadness, recedes slowly.  
You have to stick closely with your friends  
in these compartments. You watch the last familiar  
light on the lakes fade into the distance of night.  
The train rolls over the frontier into the foreign  
darkness of the fatherland, on through alien country.

Behind barbed wire windows you cut uniforms  
work long into the night. Your only freedom  
is soccer on Sundays. After months letters  
come less often. You are bent to the will of war,  
life becomes machine, uniforms, the barbed wire sky.  
A friend tries to escape, is sent to Auschwitz.  
At night the Allied planes drone overhead  
you wait, listen.. One morning you awake  
to the deserted compound and the open gate,  
the American soldiers are crossing the field.

You return to celebrations in Holland,  
parades, flags and welcome lines.  
You are treated as traitor,  
your son will not go into the army.



Herman

That first sunny morning at Katwyk  
we climbed the white ribbed sand.  
Beyond the dunes and waving grass  
the water sparkled blue and gold.  
We built castles by the sea's edge.

When I was seven I watched  
as by the bedroom window  
you sat brushing bright colours  
into the shape of the windmill,  
the tulips and the canals.  
Outside the cherry tree blossomed.

When you painted the country of Canada  
it took you weeks to shape your mountains;  
stroke by green stroke  
pine by pine you formed the forest  
the grey-purple glaciers  
a white peak shining in a windy sky.  
Slowly you painted pictures of your life.

Smoking in your room you described the war:  
you dragged firewood through heavy snow  
avoiding the patrol; outside the Hague  
you gave an orange to a starving man.  
You were never a spectator. Recently  
you leapt onto the subway tracks  
to save a barking dog.

We went to Jasper in the mountains,  
sailed across the crystal blue lake  
on a wooden raft, Jim and Huckleberry Finn  
fishing and diving through clear depths.

In the evening we drove deeper  
into the mountains to Honeymoon Campground  
pitching our tents at the edge of the forest  
among the bears.

Later we headed east, covered  
 the prairies in a day. At Secret Lake  
 we caught muskies on homemade lures.  
 Past the lakehead toward Marathon  
 we drove, laughed, told legends  
 of the Indians and the moon  
 was a red volcano. The grey winding  
 road guided us home to Toronto.

You loved the earth and its waterways;  
 nature was your theatre.  
 So clearly do I remember  
 how we raced down the mountainside  
 I following you  
                                   as the magic magnet of our skis  
 obeyed our hearts and we flew down  
                                   over the high-banked edges  
   and the curving moguls  
 down through the slopes  
                                   of that white and silver sea  
 down through the silence into evenings  
                                   around our stove and coffee.

I see you now  
 no other way than in motion:  
 sailing across Georgian Bay  
 skating down the Humber River  
 skiing down the mountainside  
 talking around the campfire.  
 Herman, you were as generous as the colours  
 and forms of the earth.  
 Your pictures became your life.

Garden of Words

## Night View

Wind is your voice  
breathes in late winter streets  
across empty chalk-white roads.  
Leave your metaphors  
on blue and silver ice  
then follow your eyes  
to the dark sky's rim,  
châteaux, mansions, canticles.  
Follow the mountain's road,  
the sound and sweep of your breath  
along high ridges  
down past domed asylums and old lamps  
where people murmur in grey breaths  
under the cold blue exile of this night.

## La Tempête

It is the hour when wind whips down  
through trees filling air with snow,  
when light is obscured by dark contours  
and the snow hurls down diminishing roads.  
Rooms blur, movement becomes line.

No longer logic, only the cold sweeping  
line of the snow, the desire for warmth  
in the veins of men.

Men at their windows  
watch their reflections, the small cubicles  
of neighbours through tangled branches.  
They escape into the fantasy of film,  
perfect movements across green combat fields.

Now is the hour when the lonely abandon  
white solitude and flee into the darkness  
of the moving vessel;

everywhere the wrecks.  
Tires whine like arguments of couples  
guilt caught in the currents of the white drift.  
The lonely go out into the whiteness,  
leave their animals in empty rooms;  
somewhere a solitary child cries.

We listen to the relief of the snow  
the blizzard howls into the night  
until it expends itself  
-a soldier, a lover.

You Should Always Carry a Pen

Looking out of the library  
window into the blue city  
my reflection sails over  
silver buildings  
up on the billows of smoke  
past radiant rooms  
where workers cover machines.

And the words come easily  
in the interior of this building;  
luminous are the rooms of your mind.  
In this library take a book,  
any book.

Beside me the woman operates  
the amazing xerox, amazing x-ray machine  
and turns the sky phosphorescent.  
She is the temptress, in green  
transforming the evening  
into the myth of a blue ocean.

You should always carry a pen  
especially at twilight  
if we are to believe  
the chronicles of Coleridge,  
his nightly walks by misty lakes.  
And the woman is making a book,  
slips it into an envelope  
and disappears.

And I am framed by evening;  
the eyes of students are globes  
suspended above their books.  
Where is the pen?  
There on the table,  
a yellow pencil  
and I take the Eagle Mirado  
ride the lines of flight  
over the darkening city.

### The Cabinet Maker

The short tanned boss  
stands before the empty studio:  
clean up this yard he tells us,  
the building has to be sold.

The man who ran this business  
went berserk;

(in the dead of-night he creeps  
into the warehouse, seizes  
the sledge hammer, punctures  
the heart of every machine  
with the skill of a deranged surgeon.)

All morning we shovel  
garbage into oil drums.  
Lunchtime, I slump on the steps  
in the cabinet maker's studio  
look at the nearly naked Sheba,  
a poster of the veteran cowboy.  
Beyond the wired windows  
sheen of leaves  
death of dreams.

The white pale powder  
drifts through machines  
beside me a green surgical mask  
half-buried in the dust.  
I can hardly breathe  
there is a pain in my head  
this man went berserk  
crept back into the warehouse.



There is a pain  
this man berserk  
groping toward the rusty can  
desperate scribblings of this man:  
Puttana de vie, two gartered girls  
naked sisters of justice  
flail each other with whips,  
a large androgynous devil leers  
at me through nausea -- eternity  
is a long time, especially  
toward the end.

I go to wash my hands  
an upside down tap spouts blood.  
Past these dead machines I grope  
into the open doorway  
shovel until I vomit;  
through the sweltering heat.  
a still rocking chair sits  
in the dark showroom window.

## High School of Montreal

In the mural Jacques Cartier  
brings gifts to the Indians.  
The tarnished plaques were inscribed  
when Greek and Latin were taught  
and Phoebus' steeds reigned  
with Victorian decorum.  
Dancers danced around Athena.  
After Somme and Vimy Ridge  
the bronze boys were engraved  
outside the office door.

A bell rings and children  
spill out of classrooms;  
Europe, China, Africa  
run beneath headless angels  
break into the library  
scramble beneath the portrait  
of the headmistress  
scribble their desires  
on classic pages.

Beyond the circulation desk  
the librarian reads "Sweetness and Light,"  
recalls Brooklyn's blue nights.  
Johnny ransacks the paintings --  
Botticelli, Rubens, Manet, Renoir  
-- searching for the naked women.

The librarian lights up another cigarette,  
looks toward Mount Royal gleaming in the sun.

Christina

1

You sit in the kitchen watch  
cars, wind up the autoroute  
run fingers over cheekbones  
are you fifty already?

On the mantelpiece  
your wedding picture, your father  
stands by his chromium mine  
up on Olympus. Below Athena  
coffee spilled on headlines.

2

You are nine years old  
and troops march down mountain  
roads, you stand in the square  
singing the anthem of Greece.  
Later, as you leave the theatre  
your uncle in a tree, swings.

When you graduate the blue and white  
flag blows above the lyceum,  
the Egyptian visits for afternoon tea,  
you sit on the sea-wall  
under the blooming oranges  
and he proposes and you sail  
the Mediterranean.

3

The day awakes in the music of Arabic  
 jewelled spires coil out of the Islamic  
 desert. Night, the Pharoahs silhouette  
 the Ptolemaic stars, the moon  
 a golden boat, Jason embarked  
 on his ancient quest  
                                 from your village.

Life blossoms as the lilies  
 along the Nile, yet there  
 are changes in the wind,  
 financial rumours,  
 shifts in government.  
 One night a friend stands  
 at the foot of the stairs, whispers:  
 "You must go, or George goes to prison."

4

And then the desert is snow,  
 you work in the university  
 on the mountain, speak  
 ancient Greek with a professor,  
 later you work at the Hudson Bay Company,  
 your only friends are immigrants.

You walk down small casual beaches  
 how to live without the sea, the village  
 the dancing Aegean nights, those myths  
 carved out of the sheer white cliffs.  
 You throw a stone into the mirror  
 of the lake, the maple reflects  
 in the clear water.

5

You return to Greece, something has changed  
the land knows you, but the people  
don't understand why you stay up  
all night watching Galactica  
over the Mediterranean.

You become angry when Greeks  
take you for an American  
and you fling out your best Greek  
for you are Greek to the bone,  
Greek as those cliffs  
standing against the invading sea.

6

Something in you has changed,  
you see it in your son, his music  
the measure that is in him;  
you look out over the autoroute  
feel that ancient quest  
stir within you  
flow into your precise fingers.

## Salmon Run at Streetsville

Down past the old red house  
the Credit sparkles, flows  
beneath the white mill;  
up on the dam  
a hundred fishermen  
try to catch the red running salmon.

The fishermen hook them  
by tail, fin, back:  
their laughter spills  
across the dazzled foam.  
They argue with one another,  
their lines become entangled.

Lost in their desires  
their twisted smiles  
enjoy the silver death.  
Mothers and children  
watch and wait,  
roe dry on the rocks.

Salmon fly up against the foam  
lunging toward clear birth shoals  
again and against the falls  
they jump  
until they are snagged  
on one of those hundred hooks.

## Music in the Snow

Now is the moment when things fit in  
the bankbook drops into a secret socket  
out there money again  
and the boundary is clear,  
the halo around a lightbulb  
seen from a distant forest.

This is the moment, the resumption of music  
when the moon parts her curtain  
and logic is a fence  
following the slope of hills.

Now is the moment, striking of the baton  
twirling of gold coins on counters,  
meeting of lips;  
here too one will dance on snow  
and not act on the tragic stage.

This is the moment when it follows  
the picture lifted out of the canvas  
swirled back deeply into the cosmos  
back into the creator's heart,  
the strong rush by semi-lunar valves  
love you moon, of my heart, my heart.

Girl Walking on Friday Afternoon

Over the sidewalk she moves  
her coat dark above her hips.

Nor does she alter that pace  
moving under the stained glass  
myths, the gothic domes.

Evenly she moves  
through melting snow  
by running water  
up toward mountain boulevard.

She stops, turns  
raises three curled fingers  
to the strands of her hair  
glances into the bright wind  
steps down into the street.



## Pinballs

Under fingertips machine is music  
 moves to your inner rhythm  
 the ball springs into trajectory  
 slides down fortune's alley  
 spins through the gates  
 of paradise  
     past pyramids  
     tempting sirens  
 pillars of Hercules  
                     the liberty bell  
 out into a space odyssey.

You are musician...soldier...lover  
 dexterity is your art  
 in this world of light, action, colour;  
 you press, flick, gyrate  
 and the silver ball  
     contacts the coloured points  
 breaking into chimes.

Among grey-haired businessmen  
 expert boys and timorous girls  
 you combat the machine  
 parents  
     and governments

follow the movement  
     of your fortune  
 as the machine  
     lights up your dream:  
 Hollywood...hockey...disco  
 immersing you in this coloured  
 synesthesia  
     and you fight against  
 the score until the light flashes,  
     "Game Over."

## Walk into Autumn

Walking out toward the bridge  
the morning clear overhead  
the white road winding  
    a clear path of thought  
the brown water stirred  
    flowing round the river bend  
the leaves already turning red.

We mature as the season  
the gold leaves still against the sky.  
What is time beside that crooked fence  
and those stones?

    Something seen in les beaux-arts  
old man saunters through the wood.

Birds veering  
into arcs of migration  
as we move toward winter.

## Toward Rimouski

Recall the river  
the long, low glimmering of gold  
on the blue-grey water,  
the green islands in the flow  
and the ships...

Clouds: domes, cupolas and pyramids  
we could almost get up and walk  
through corridors of those kingdoms  
where stories and the songs  
of fishermen and sailors rose  
blue voices in the wind.

Tents hug the hillside:  
voices of mothers and children  
sing, echo in another language  
cars drift across the slopes, satellites  
blue slowly dissolves  
into dark resonance of space.

Settle into the sleeping bag  
dream of ships moving across water  
away from the city  
out toward the island,  
swim through warm water and snowflakes  
and the ship bringing us back.

The spirit breathes lightly  
mist on water,  
the Indian singing in the poplars.

Sunlight wavers on sky-blue tent  
we have a hunger for the morning,  
the fuzzy figures of campers  
move through valley's distant smoke  
and by the fire we take our coffee  
and world slowly assumes its outline:  
mountain, valley, brook, auberge.

In the grass,  
the purple sage flower  
buttercups and marigolds  
the games of older days  
strawberries ripen near rocks  
bees hover around the bursting daisies  
here the exact flowering  
under the black giant hills of morning.

## Midnight Hunger

Out of darkness  
these words shine as fruit:

I forget their texture  
the taste on the tongue

how syllables move in the mouth  
and the flavour of diction

released as I peel the leopard  
skin, those ripe Latin vowels.

The golden pomme sings  
out of the primal garden

and the mysterious orange  
shines over a violet sea.

In these roots and stems  
is the flower's form.

## Two Oranges

Snow hangs on the fence,  
the air is cold blue,  
death a dark window.

I am learning to feel.  
Before me two oranges  
in a brown bowl.

I hold them,  
feel their weight rise  
through my fingers into my arms.

In this silence before sleep  
I place two oranges  
within the rim of our lives.

## Balcony

Glancing at my directions  
 for the number of your house on Ste. Famille  
 those Parisian fronts with Brooklyn railings  
 across Sherbrooke tarnished figures from antiquity  
 then you two waving from a balcony.

On the doorglass a pastel flower  
 blooming:

bound up the stairs  
 as they give way, waves  
 leap up into the light of your apartment  
 music of Morocco swirling  
 through Greek pillars, crystal chandeliers,  
 a mosque glimmers in dark water  
 in an alcove of a photo

people are waiting  
 you on the balcony by a rusty railing  
 waiting: pigeons, grey, mauve, green feathers  
 rise through heat

vertigo  
 and so here we sit on this shaky balcony  
 above Ste. Famille

and talk  
 about Indian rhythms, Black rhythms  
 and one floor down  
 a girl in a blue garb  
 sits before her round red table  
 café, fromage et croissants.

Soon in the yellow kitchen  
 the lady and the unicorn singing  
 singing of Mallarmé's angel  
 and out there  
 in the lavender light skies  
 the sun setting on the green mountain  
 our dark bodies outlined,  
 the balcony,  
 glowing.

After the Blizzard

Snow whirls round balconies  
 sweeping against the sky  
     grey clouds gather in the zenith  
 as the wind rises beating the snow  
     pulling the base chord of air.  
 Down in the pool girls laughing  
     as boys splash around them,  
 sky darkens beyond the snow screen.

Someone is talking about apocalypse.  
 The swimmers are gone, pool is aquamarine.  
 Above the mountain's black and white rim  
 touches of orange, yellow, rose.

In the blue sea of the sky white fish swim  
 darker clouds, horsemen riding across  
     the pathway of the evening  
                                     riding over the city  
 across the pastel meadow  
                                     round the sapphire world  
 drifting deeper into night  
     we lie in bed  
 smoke drifts through darkness  
 a white beacon scans a starless sky  
 somewhere a door bangs  
     someone steps into night  
 the electric current of the orange clock  
 trills in rapids over pebbles,  
     a cat meows  
 the wind is a child's plaintive cry  
 echoing through dark alleys.

In a Chinese pagoda a candle glimmers  
 burning its violet and yellow flame.  
 We are all colours now,  
 calm as the river.



## Nymphae

In the Botanical Gardens  
pale people stroll  
among the blooming flowers,

the water-lily,  
a Pre-Raphaelite Ophelia  
French, La Nénuphar:  
a yellow butterfly I saw once  
on a stamp of Mozambique,  
but the Greek, Nymphae,  
lady, that's my flower,  
bride of water, amphibious beauty  
whose fibrous body grows  
down through those depths  
into the earth.

What tragedy have you blossomed from?  
You sang out of the wood of Delphi  
the destiny of lonely women,  
you appeared to metaphysical poets  
in late English nights,  
you attracted Monet  
who spent his final years  
painting your body of petals.

Cool air wafts the lacy willow,  
along the white path we walk  
solitary in the dazzling summer air,  
some drowsy lotus aroma  
drifts to us in the wind.

Silence

To be in touch with things  
mist bathes the coasts of the world.

Should I type tonight  
cause the Chinese man to waken.

Upstairs a boy cries out from a nightmare  
his Japanese mother slips out of bed.

Soon she will stand before the waterfall  
in the rock gardens of Kyoto.

The little boy will say "hello"  
to the ancient guard of the gate.

My typewriter is a silent temple  
blue mist drifts across a distant shore.

The Mountain

## Spring Winds

By the window I wait  
as you read, an unusual air  
breathes open the curtain  
across the grey sea of snow:  
yesterday, black man at the bus stop  
cars rose from subterranean shadows  
into mind's bright intersection.

And the bed is a moving vessel  
I want to awaken  
snap these cold, tight moorings  
escape this silent movie  
that entrances the city  
in a strange sleep.

Already the sea recedes  
things push themselves up  
snow thaws and now we  
renew correspondence,  
make love in these warm  
white billows, the cats  
dash through the changing air  
and resolution comes.

Locked in the dark cell,  
my cool room in this ice-palace  
I rise, open curtains  
see beyond asylums, schools, bureaux,  
beyond the gothic utopia of the mountain  
with its legends of snow and  
frozen boundaries.

## Nelligan

Getting off the metro on the way to work  
I would see you Nelligan in that bronze  
constellation with Garneau and Crémazie  
as the crowd eddied on:  
your thought was the colour of distant moons.

Through these years I have gathered the tableaux  
of your life: the house where you played down  
on Carré St. Louis, your walks with Dantin  
through old winding streets, that voyage  
to Liverpool and Belfast  
and that clear night in the Château de Ramezay.

Waiting for work in the manpower office  
down on Bleury, waiting with the other workers  
reading their Montréal Matins and Gazettes.  
Adam Star looked across at me with red eyes:  
"Find out about the real story of Jesus  
and Mary."

Next door the tarnished green plaque  
erected for you by friends. There you wrote  
by candlelight after you quit college  
wandered down sloping, misty streets  
past dark studios, sawdust taverns  
in search of that ideal state of art.

Each day was a different job,  
moving carpet rolls, unloading cotton bales,  
painting trucks, cleaning out factories.  
Lunchtime I translated your words  
to the humming of machinery, your paintings  
of gardens, saints and black angels.

You left family and friends  
 sailed to Belfast.  
 Out of the mist the dung-shaded  
 city rose as the vessel glided  
 among skeletal cranes, prehistoric  
 creatures rising out of the ancestral land;  
 and the morning of my return  
 the sea was amniotic green, spilled  
 under the pinkslip of the sky,  
 swans glided through tar-water.

This was no golden vessel,  
 no Celtic world of green song;  
 among marines you were a stranger.  
 Night and the ship rolled  
 and the poems would come in dreams:  
 half-naked women wandering  
 among bombed naves, women  
 draped in nuns' habits  
 shining brightly as ravens' wings.

Again you move in your natal forests,  
 and the purple mountains and green hills,  
 where lecherous Capuchins revel  
 with the languorous women of Rubens.  
 Your thought was the colour of distant moons  
 the white boat sailing  
 through the psychic night.

At the Rotterdam auctionhouse I worked  
 behind glass and later along midnight  
 lanes walked recalling Zarathustra;  
 crows flew across the brilliant moon  
 swerved through the fevered air  
 as the laughter of lovers  
 spilled over canals.



It was plainly a lie.  
Rimbaud seeing no answer  
took off to Africa  
where he was more at home  
with the forces that moved him,  
move man.

And you, Émile,  
searched for pure beauty  
gazed through words' violet radiation  
toward the blazing mountain  
until that night the songs  
flooded your vessel  
and you collapsed in fever.

Nietzsche saw the man whipping the horse  
high up on the mountain,  
the sun lashed the blister of the sea  
and the moon's broken lute  
sank under the waves.

That night I heard your poems  
sung by the chansonnière  
at Le Patriote, your face  
in that of the young woman,  
but above the shouting and laughing  
to popular songs, the stamping  
to an Irish jig and on her  
invocation of your death  
you expired to Volaré.

Walking up Jeanne Mance  
before the storm  
toward the old convent  
I stopped at a friend's  
and listened to Brahms'  
Requiem. Across the road  
they bombed Concordia.



You sat in that dark room  
looked across the years  
and years of snow and heat  
toward the memory  
of the song of the mountain.

It began to rain,  
the mountain lost in mist,  
thunder cracked the sky.  
Two girls at the door,  
"Nous cherchons une chambre."  
her father was the infirmier  
in whose arms you died.

The silence claimed you  
I walked home through mist  
lamps glowed like eyes in the night  
and the green shoots sprouted  
through the cracked earth.

Sometimes walking the city  
I see your house, hear  
the piano composing your music  
across Carré St. Louis  
echoing through the sunset,  
your song that is forming  
in the trees.

The Mountain

1

Approach the north slope  
as road winds round  
"La tour des vierges."  
Light among coloured leaves  
glances off gravestones  
ski-slope weaves  
down to scrimmaging boys,  
beyond theatres, churches.

2

Down to St. Viateur where Hassidic Jews  
stroll past the shop of baking bagels  
and Greeks eat souvlaki in rusty Fords  
before the posters of the Acropolis.  
Here an old fisherman tosses up candy octopus  
as crabs claw the air/  
their underbellies, sky-blue porcelain.

3

Cruising down Park Avenue past the mountain's  
coloured garment. Workers have scrubbed  
the angel, the lions and the politicians.  
Angel, protector of language  
your wings rise out of concrete  
fly before the mountain's smoky colours.

4

You linger before the last white credits,  
listen to scraps of other people's lives.  
The crowd moves beyond the film's music,  
the mother drowning in the sea,  
the daughter's angry soliloquy.  
Old people stare at the closing curtains.

5

Night's hunger gathers around the mountain.  
People move out among the dark statues  
of politicians and poets; in a theatre window  
a circus, ballet dancer, unicycles, clowns!  
Pastels of lake, house, a woman:  
an artist smiles at the imaginary country.

6

The road winds through the day.  
These images rise through me:  
you bending down and releasing white seeds,  
words rising through tall grass  
into the patterns of the sky,  
fiery pinwheels turning high above the graves.

7

And I cut into the pomegranate  
bite through the rind  
suck the thick red seeds.  
Blood spills out of the pulp,  
I forget the bittersweet taste  
of the path we walk along each day.

Down the mountain  
 and the sky-blue crab,  
 and the milk-pod with its bursting  
 buds,  
 down past the angel, the lions  
 and the workers  
 and the lake  
 that I eat.

As the day closes  
 I am going down into sleep  
 winding past parks  
 the graveyard  
 in the coloured forest.

Open the rind  
 and it will come  
 the music of words  
 in sleep, dream and thought  
 and I reach out  
 hold this fruit once again.



## Changing Seasons

We are the dream awakening  
you unfold as a warm blue night  
golden light in a dark forest  
moving to the sea's silent rhythm.

And snow of April melting  
crystals dissolve into water,  
the night is stark,  
the stars are cells.

And in the turning of the seasons  
light flashes upon the earth  
as on a cheek and in its turning  
we are the dream awakening.

And we move into the night  
to rhythm of sea, stars, turning earth  
moving clearly into the path of light,  
we are the dream awakening.

Voices in the Wind

Each day a different school  
and mornings the bus stops  
takes on new immigrants  
weaves out of the labyrinth  
of the city,  
language  
debates and advertisements.

So we rise out of headlines  
dreams, move up Mount Royal  
past Plato College,  
search for a new republic;  
Atlantis sank  
beneath the waves at Knossos.

And we pass among

Aristotle's Creations  
Librairie Papyrus  
Electra's furniture  
Pascal's hardware

looking for the real.

Who are you today?  
Each day a different subject  
English, French, History...

In the staff room  
the grey-haired Phys. Ed. teacher  
lights up another cigarette  
recalls playing on Nesbitt's farm.

- Your deal.
- Money's going to Vermont.
- Ya, Sam packed up Midnight  
moved to Palm Beach.

And we played among the hills  
could see the nuns knitting  
in la collège classique.

- Your play.
- Wife's suing him for all she can get.

We used to play hockey on the pond  
before the big house  
shot between the boots.

- What's trump?
- Hearts.
- As long as you know the rules you can  
stay.

They put the highway right through there,  
out of date the day it was built.

Bell rings we move  
deeper into the maze:  
disco beat,  
accents of Caribbean,  
and Aegean.  
Lockers swing open  
to sounds of John Travolta,  
shapes of Charlie's Angels.

- Boy, you should have seen her parabolas.

Among the desks,  
the broken routines I walk  
recall the exiled neighbours.

Next door the Chinese man  
stirs, dreams of sunlight  
shining on the Yangtze.

And the Polish man polishes  
his machines in the Coin-O-Matic  
reflects on his lost son.

The corner grocer eyes  
the snow-ploughs,  
tanks occupying the Ukraine,  
recalls four years in the Black Forest.

Behind the grill  
the Greek director  
wipes sweat from his brow  
thinks of an old film.

And the wind blows  
through Carré St. Louis  
ghosts of Nelligan  
and exiled Crémazie.

Winter occupies us,  
we move through this maze  
of magasin windows,  
look at masks, politics,  
Theseus and Jesus;  
winter's giant filibuster  
conspires against us.



Spring brings us out  
leaves blossom  
wind whispers through galleries  
strangers emerge onto balconies  
gazing down onto the stage.

We enter the mountain park  
follow the contours  
of the road  
when morning sunlight shines  
on the childhood sea  
and waves break into words.

We move beyond the walls,  
the barbed wire and memories of war,  
climb among these rocks  
until we reach the summit.

Below the city glistens  
in a twilight tapestry  
bridges span the dark currents;  
our lives,  
a labyrinth of streets  
spread before us.

## Vigil

I am brought back to this room  
this late vigil:  
that voice in the dream  
and waking. Can you go home?  
No. Home is a place in the head:  
this room, this page, this night...

I do not know what to carve out of this air.  
What place where I live  
in what bivouac  
in what intense enterprise, my life -- the circus.  
No, it is more an idea than a place  
a voice that is always correcting itself.

And you, this person I am talking to,  
how can I know you

except by listening.

We are exiles  
hearing the same sounds in different places.  
Are they so different?

The world is dark at my window,  
the voices of people clamour in their dreams,  
but we go on,  
as runner or explorer;  
move through darkness  
to a still vision,  
the pain in the lover's eyes,  
the old woman at her window  
looking up at the lamp

the lamp that shines on the street  
no matter what we call it.  
We shall not suffer  
the pain of purity.

but move down the rolling hills  
over harvested fields toward the sun  
see our shadows grow over the cold earth  
and the moon rise

and here,  
the earth is blue and green  
the colours of the eye.