

Self-portrait

Poems by

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Self-Portrait

What terror in your russet eyes,
Vincent. Mantled by brow
and hooded bone,
it leaps out of its socket
as if to distance itself from brain.

Is it all for the sin of color,
for seeing the northern lights in the swallow's flight,
for seeing a dry rain fall—
silvery, like guitar string bits?

Is it for seeing God both in the shut-in whore
and the peasant child as she
merges, like a violet iris, with her small garden?

Is it for seeing sheaves of wheat
lean like amber lovers?

Oh, Vincent, joy in the flux;
joy in the green blindness
that burns your brush blue.

Joy in the eye that fixes the vortex
of the yellow sun, in the spinning
of the diamond stars.

Joy in the cypress that swaggers
like a shaggy buffalo
in the angled prairie.

Joy in the church spire that rises into the sky;
Joy in the sky that flows its serpents into hills
streams, firs

Joy in the almond blossoms,
poppies

Joy in the dandelion brooks

my prayer in age

my strength fails
who shall care for me
my children have their own children who need caring
and my younger child is like a sapling,
a young birch,
who herself needs tending
who shall right my limbs
as they falter and bend with pain
and who shall care for my eyes
that burn and hurt
who shall right my hand
as it trembles
my heart as it beats
too fast

My Buddha

I will let my silence
be my screams
my peace my terror
my dry eye my tears
I will let the ocean
be my desert
the full moon my darkness
and your open face
my blindness
and all that lives and breathes:
lady bug cat dandelion
weed sea gull
brown eyes
prickly sting of rose
be my paradise