

DM. REYES



## Telling Time

I keep certainty  
through strange ways  
of telling time:

the cranes Marjorie taught me  
to fold, gathered in a box:  
gold and blue wings rustling  
in the time of healing.

A taper candle for the eve  
of autumn's equinox,  
to light my beloved's path  
while I sing the difficult sutras  
of farewell.

Even the morning star  
and the habit of rising at five  
to find the day's measure  
of peace by counting  
from one to ten.

Coming home,  
I have declared grief—  
setting the clock  
in the strangest of ways:

To sleep through dark  
and endure my loss,  
to will rain, dripping  
without end and let the frogs  
croak down the untended pond.

Until this morning when  
a sparrow rested on the sill,  
promising to declare sunrise  
if I ask the bird to beat its wings.

And for all that a sparrow  
brings, I write this poem.

## Gestures

*(after Marguerite Yourcenar)*

Into a hole that is  
Either Nothing or God—  
But always, and in time,  
A hand will cast away  
All this love: hurled down  
The sprinting torrents  
Or on edge of faithless winds  
To believe that all  
Will be forgotten at last.

Save that today, the heart  
Rules out that what it meets  
At the turn of the road  
Is just an accident of well-  
Angled shadows and the late light,  
But takes without shame  
Every gesture that God  
Bothers to return:

Shapes of hard-won glances,  
Embraces, and kisses  
Turned into beautiful things,  
Like the outspoken stillness  
That waits where the road turns  
And the corn field's hemmed—

In leaf by slender leaf  
Bent in fire-orange light,  
Shaking the risen stalks  
To sweetness,  
The blooming tops calling  
The grains to fullness:  
To be plenty, yellow, and ripe

And the lushness really more  
Than my eyes can ever take—  
An unowned bounty,  
A sudden blessing run wild.

## Heartlight

Sometimes, like desert wanderers  
we search the evening:

fragrance of the spring rain,  
mantle of bluegreen morning,  
or sand shelter—to sleep  
without firelight or tent.

We unravel the sky's paths,  
borrowing the seafarer's heart.

Aquarius tilts her jug,  
pouring the orient and occident  
of tides—earthward the light-  
years, awesome like love.

Between the errand of hands,  
a glance while grinding the wheel,  
writing the poem, shaping the jug.

We ask for the constancy  
of light.

With clay, leaf, red,  
sandalwood, or silence,  
we shape whatever  
the hands love

while heading for the golden bend,  
waiting for our weary lives  
to meet the heartlight,

and, like the night sky,  
be sanctified.

## From A Window

And bright like dewdrops falling,  
The rain betrays the day  
While the heart loses its bid  
To be like steel.

It's just a heart  
Turned homeless and unwise  
Or why did it listen to a bird,  
Stranded on a wet bough?

Betrayed creature  
With wise man's eyes—

Does it feel  
Its milkwhite feathers wet,  
Or the gray afternoon  
Break its wings  
With painful chill?

And if, in truth, it knows  
And need some shelter—

The lonely gaze  
Betrays its wanderings,  
Recalls a home beyond  
Recall, but lost all day  
To this weather,  
Forbidding flight  
From pain,

Lending this window  
And all the mountains  
The rain's slow patter.

## For Giuletta Masina

Death becomes a river,  
wide and shining  
with sun gold, today.

And in an instance  
of spring, goldcrests  
show the way.

Sundials declare  
the blooming of rose trees  
and grassflowers.

A caravan waits.

You ride with Zampano,  
wide-eyed waif  
of our wanderings,

to warm with trick or song  
the snowy evening.

Dear, gentle Gelsomina  
you cast jasmynes  
which the heart can  
not bear to hoard.

And your candles, Cabiria,  
bought for love's price,  
your heart—

traded for silver  
worthless as the stranger  
that stole it away.

You walk under  
the most watchful moon,  
eye of the friendless night

and the innocent dancers,  
the drummers, flutist,  
and accordion-player  
ring around you—

wayfarers on the bend,  
seeking love or sadness,

wishing to know what  
is, in truth, this most  
beautiful evening.