

THREE POEMS

Walter Darrell Haden

THE BAKERY COFFEE BUNCH

Sam's funeral is at one today.
I expect that I won't go.
We had our twenty years together
In the Bakery coffee bunch
That met to see one another and
Smoke and gossip for a half hour
About every weekday morning.
Sam got to where he couldn't drive,
Then he couldn't walk for shortness of breath
The couple of blocks
It is from his house to the coffee shop
But still his wife would help him dress and out the door.
One of us would pick him up
From where he would stop to catch his breath
Or take him home when he had
Finished his second cup and stubbed
Out another unfiltered cigarette.
If fact, now that I come to think of it
Sam was about the only one of us that kept on smoking
At almost eighty-nine, I guess he was the last
Of us to quit.

I HAVE BEEN MUCH LATELY ABOUT OLD HOUSES

I have been much lately about old houses;
How thin the old walls grow,
Separating where no one lives
From the unquiet dead.

I have heard much lately around old houses,
Dry skin stretched where bone and blood once meshed.
Paper thin, only the wind listens now,
The wind alive, alone, among the dead.

Dun fields and hollows whistle
Through the eyes
Cobwebbed, cataract-shivered
Eyes where love looked out,
No one locked in.

Now only a deathwatch ticks time in the wall
While furtive little feet tramp on through the night.
I have been much lately about old houses:
How thin the old walls grow.

LANCASTER VALLEY, PENNSYLVANIA

The farmer's Clydesdales cut the clodded earth
Into giant steps, dirt and dried
Manure flying, fragmented behind
The Amish spreader they pull across black fields:
Lancaster County, Pennsylvania
Not even the tourists litter it,
Driving in awe between the black,
Green and red barns and old world
Dwellings, farmsteads, with their picture people.
Their buggies and wagons and high-stepping harness horses,
Cheeses, pies, apple pan-dowdies,
Dumplings and children and
Red, black and white cows in green fields
Orchards in bloom, vineyards greening,
Wineries, stone fences
and north up the valley, suddenly through a fog,
Three-Mile Island.

