It shall not end,
son, it will not end,
this love.

Again and again,
the earth is new again.
They come, listen, listen.
Hold on to your mother's hand.
They come

O great joy, they come.
The plants with bells.
The stones with voices.
Listen, son, hold my hand.

1977

Vision Shadows

Wind visions are honest.
Eagles clearly soar
to the craggy peaks
of the mind.
The mind is full
of sunprayer
and childhood.

The Mountains dream
about pine brothers and friends,
the mystic realm of boulders
which shelter
rabbits, squirrels, wrens.
They believe in the power.
They also believe
in quick eagle death.

The eagle loops
into the wind power.
He can see a million miles
and more because of it.

All believe things
of origin and solitude.

But what has happened
(I hear strange news from Wyoming
of thallium sulphate.1 Ranchers
bearing arms in helicopters.)

to these visions?
I hear foreign tremors.
Breath comes thin and shredded.
I hear the scabs of strange deaths
falling off.

Snake hurries through the grass.
Coyote is befuddled by his own tricks.
And Bear whimpering pain into the wind.

Poisonous fumes cross our sacred paths.
The wind is still.
O Blue Sky, O Mountain, O Spirit, O
what has stopped?

Eagles tumble dumbly into shadows
that swallow them with dull thuds.
The sage can't breathe.
Jackrabbit is lonely and alone
with eagle gone.

It is painful, aile, without visions
to soothe the dry whimper
or repair the flight of eagle, our own brother.

1977

From Poems from the Veterans Hospital

8:50 AM Ft. Lyons VAH

The Wisconsin Horse1 hears the geese.

They wheel from the west.
First the unfamiliar sounds,
and then the memory recalls
ancient songs.

Sky is gray and thick.
Sometimes it is the horizon
and the sky weighs less.

The Wisconsin Horse cranes
his neck.
The geese veer
out of sight
past the edge of a building.

1. A chemical used by farmers as a rat poison.

1. See headnote, p. 3024.
The building is not old, built in 1937. 
Contains men broken from three American wars.

Less and less, the sound, and it becomes the immense sky.

From Sand Creek

At the Salvation Army
a clerk
cought me
wandering
among old spoons
and knives,
sweaters and shoes.

I couldn’t have stolen anything; my life was stolen already.

Billy Collins

b. 1941

The voice in a Billy Collins poem is so intimate and immediate that we feel we are in the same room with the poet. Collins himself imagines poet and reader as if sitting together at a breakfast table: "I will lean forward, / elbows on the table, / with something to tell you / and you will look up, as always, / your spoon dripping with milk, ready to listen" ("A Portrait of the Reader with a Bowl of Cereal"). The colloquial voice in his poems charms us with its air of spontaneous expression, its modesty, its humor. If some of his poems coast on charm alone, Collins’s best work takes us on a surprising ride: its strange and unexpected associations deepen the familiar into the mysterious or make the mysterious familiar.

Describing the structures of his poetry, Collins says, "We are attempting, all the time, to create a logical, rational path through the day. To the left and right there are an amazing set of distractions that we can’t afford to follow. But the poet is willing to stop anywhere." His poems often proceed as accounts of a day and its distractions, as in "Tuesday, June 4, 1991." At the same time the formal shapelessness of Collins’s work endows ordinary activity with a strange and pleasing formality and turns it, line by measured line and stanza by stanza, into a ritual containing both the pleasures
My Mother and my Sisters

by

Simon Ortiz

My oldest sister wears thick glasses
because she can't see very well.
She makes beautifully formed pottery.
That's the thing about making dhyuuni;
it has more to do with a sense of touching
than with seeing because fingers
have to know the texture of clay
and how the pottery is formed from lines
of shale strata and earth movements.
The pottery she makes is thinwalled
and has a fragile but definite balance.
In other words, her pottery has a true ring
when it is tapped with a finger knuckle.

Here, you try it;
you'll know what I mean.

The design that my mother is painting
onto the bowl is done with a yucca stem brush.
My other sister says, "Our mother,
she can always tell when someone else has used
a brush that she is working with," because
she has chewed it and made it into her own way.
She paints with movements whose origin
has only to do with years of knowing
just the right consistency of paint,
the tensile vibrancy of the yucca stem,
and the design that things are supposed to have.

She can always tell.

My mother talks about one time.
"One time, my sister and I
and this one lady - she was
a fat woman - went to roast piñons.
Stuwahmeeskuunaati, over that way."
To the east of Aacqu the mesa cliffs
are red, brown, and white sandstone;
there are piñon trees there.
"We left in the morning
and walked up to the first level,
not on top, where there was a lot
of piñons that year.
We had to get the piñons
in their cones from the trees
and dig a hole and bury them
and then build a fire on top.
It took quite a while
to do that, like it does.
And then we got them out
and let them cool,
and then we gathered them
up and put them on our backs
in sacks. We started back
to Aacqu." It's a long ways
across the valley, sandhills,
grasses, brush, cottonwoods,
gullies, cacti. "When we got
to this one place, the woman said,
'this is where Maashadruwee lives.
You have to holler.'
You're supposed to yell or holler.
We prayed with cornmeal
and the lady said, 'Please
Maashadruwee, make Aacqu closer
to us.' And we started again
but before we got to Aacqu
onto the south trail,
it grew dark.
We knew that our relatives
would worry about us.
And sure enough, the woman's husband
was looking and he met us
at the bottom of the trail.
When we got to south of the church,
my father met us - he had come
to look for us too."
My mother chuckles at the memory
of it, when she was a young girl.
'I don't know if my sister
remembers, but I do, very clearly.
But I don't know
what my age was then.'

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