

Ode to a Mountain Man

Mister Mountain Man
 Can you trap me a dream
 while you are out looking
 for marten and otter and mink?

We don't have many dreams anymore
 because we don't have much faith anymore
 in anything
 and there aren't too many people left
 who really understand
 the kinds of hardship which you endured
 and there are almost none
 who understand the nature of freedom.

You worked hard
 and you played hard
 and you refused to accept anything
 that you didn't earn
 and you wouldn't have had it
 any other way.

Let's put the coffee pot
 over by the fire
 and boil up some coffee
 and celebrate being
 in the company
 of another human being.

It's spring and we're not dead yet!

—Anonymous

Whale Song

"My Brother, let me hear you sing,
 Feel the sunlight on your moist fin."

Boughs serrating the horizon, I watch black
 bear
 pawing and turning a fallen log, he senses

the salmon returning from the sea. Bleached
 bones
 gathering sound, seagulls plunge sharply graying

the edges of rocks. Osprey screeches, startled
 killdeer

scurry across the railroad tracks as their shrill
 cries

echo into the yellow field. I carve cedar into
 whale,
 feeling the smoothness of shiny abalone fin
 inlay.

Whale joyously surfaces, its arc becoming blue.
 "Yes, I understand as I watch you emerging

My Brother, let me hear your voice,
 Let me listen and learn your song."

—Earle Thompson

To Things Without Substance

I walked home from work last night
 and my bones felt too big for my skin.
 The streets were strange and deserted.
 It was my birthday.
 I wished for love, which seemed
 as far away as the moon
 convulsing on her ragged bed of clouds.

Encased in the cold
 I swung past the dark stores
 toward coffee, morning and sleep.
 And the wind whistled in my ear
 like a question.

—Elizabeth Romero

Speaking With Hands

A baby's hands are always beautiful.
 I was twelve when Adrienne was born;
 I was old enough to notice.
 I swear she waved her hands more urgently
 than any other baby.

When she was four
 she could wrap chubby fingers
 around a broom, and sweep,
 and she did.