

## *A Birthday Party*

At twenty I was scarcely human  
my blood tuliped as the wine  
quivering on the crystal stem  
I wore my body like  
a garland of tinsel and jasmine;

Now the guests have left  
leaving their dead compulsions  
stamped on the prostrate grass  
half-burnt cigarettes in spilled wine  
sizzling, crackling funeral-pyres  
of small desires;

The memory of one  
once swam in my head  
in trackless movements of a fish in water;

Tonight a dream will be  
of the baited body  
threshing the river's mud  
into a gaping wound.

VIMALA RAO