

Perfection of the Work

A poem is written to go a long way.
It must be as subtle as the signs given
By a woman who has been beaten
And stayed, who wants your help
But not to let him know
And not to leave.

A poem might be intercepted
Too soon if it is not impassive.
A poem could end up
In the wrong hands.

A poem is maddeningly
Hard to reach: it wants your love
And attention but no matter how much
You love it it will not love you
As much as the pain it requires
In order to be born.

A poem should be very good
So you will remember it, although
You did not notice at the time.
It should survive.

A poem should be very good, like a woman
Who has her life to consider.
It should please you, feed you
Enrich you. You ought to be able
To quote it without shame
At the right moment, like a proverb.

The poem cannot be this good, nor can the woman.
They both long for you to understand
But you can't. You have your own life
To consider; maybe there is no threat
Of death, but it's yours and that takes
Precedence, and no wonder.

The woman leaves the house without a plan.
She walks in the darkness past the bar
To a floodlit parking lot, and sits on a curb
And writes a list of what she knows.
It is artless, and written in a state of shock.
It will not get her very far.

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