



Learning to Crawl

For Ivy

Her knees wake up at night—
They push her bottom into the air
And propel her forward until
Her head mashes the lamb-covered
crib bumpers.
She can go no farther—
In hot, painful gasps, she cries.

She's getting ready to crawl—
She dreams it first.
Her own hugeness in the dream
Frightens her.

So even while I
(Awakened and standing by)
Pull her
Soothe her
Center her—
See her begin to spill like milk
Onto the sheet—

She'll tense and cry again
Until I've held her,
And she's felt in the heat of
my arms and breath
That I am bigger,
She is small once more.

- 1990

A New Mother's Afternoon

She's bicycling on her back
In the bassinet.
Crying out.
Trying out her voice
In squeaks and sighs.
She used to cycle miles in the soft cave
Of my uterus--
Those bad dreams
Of her twisting and twirling in distress--
Now I laugh at what I feared.
This girl is going to run!

In the afternoon sun I watch her flop open
The way bread slices fall once the bag's
been untied,
Gently her head goes to the side,
She startles, jerks, sighs and finally
sleeps.

Abruptly I am tugged, tugged
Like a powerless child,
By a mother's hand
Led from a delightful store window. . .

Until the apartment is drenched in peace.
We both are asleep.

- 1990

Evening Song

Girls singing in the backyard open door
I am to stay nearby
Still young they need to know that I am near

All else is quiet heavy on my ear
A night enclosed by cool, a starless sky
Girls singing in the backyard open door

No friend's phone call piercing purchased air
No beloved's voice to call forth mine
Still young they need to know that I am near

I stay nearby and know the care
And feel how earth is nurtured by her night
Girls singing in the backyard open door

I know aloneness empty of despair
Emptied, to be filled up by and by
Still young they need to know that I am near

My heart is quiet, this is what I hear
No memories, no wants intrude or pry
Girls singing in the backyard open door
Still young they need to know that I am near

- 1990