

OF MEMORY AND FLESH

ARE WE ALIKE in moments nearing sleep,
We two who share remembered pain?—

When inside the darkness made
By the flesh before my eyes,
I lose sight of what I know by day,
And fear how I must live apart
From figures cast in memory.

Waking still, I try to conjure
Images to lead me into dreams.

I find myself beside a frozen river
Far from where I lie and far from sleep.
It is winter here; a gentle snow
Drifts down toward my face and hands.
I ask the shadows cast by barren trees
How I forget so much of you,
So much I must have known.

I catch a snowflake in my hand,
And watch it melt upon my skin.

If I could bring the cold of winter
To rest inside my hand,
My blood a frozen river—
Could I hold intact for ever
This lattice-work of crystal?

I exist as flesh and heat:
What is drawn to me of winter
Must melt and pass my hand,
Most drawn into the air
To rise, and join, and fall again.
But some small bead of water
Will find a path into my skin,
Drawn in time into
The little fibres of my heart.

And here is how we are alike,
We two who now forget ourselves:

It was our choice
To seek the ageless grip of ice
And hold to all we knew must change,
Or accept a heat of memory and flesh—
Take what we may into our hearts
As what remains will mist away.