John Berryman’s Recovery

Berryman may be found dreaming,
the poet conscious of words
sounding from heaven where
I do not want him to die.

Drinking his depression to death,
the old man is a child again
as the drunkard seeking sobriety,
there being so many futures
with all the ways of recovering.
No life is certain in itself:
Berryman is the poet falling,
ever reaching the ice-still river
if an angel intervenes,
raising him up to understand
a certain life and a wilder one
in homage to ancestral music
becoming his Dream Songs.

Imagining his choice
catched between bridge and water,
the poetry, like paper, flew
from the heart of a broken man
to the whole of a life.

Then there was no more.
What was there remains
for us to follow down
into a mind making sense
at last of all the words
that might be and surely are.

Hunting

There is a sky darkening:
the shadow of flight on the water,
The sacrifice of self by fear
demands a steady hand
The hunting of the wild,
a body to be devoured,
whose death will not be mourned,
cloistered against the world.
The solitude so clearly appeals
when it falls and there is no-one
away from human eyes
and common understanding
without a word of ceremony.
What happens is thought natural.
There remain the signs of flight

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