

**GAY ALLISON**  
**Winter Night in Peterborough**  
*for H.K., in memory of Margaret Laurence*

*Below, on the lawn,  
a hunched figure rakes the black  
light of grass & without notice turns  
into a set of swings.*

Everyone is sleeping.  
I stand at the window  
watch frozen roses & lilies heaped on your grave,  
floating by. In the quiet of this night  
comes sounds of bombing, children screaming, and  
blood seeping into earth, milk into bread.  
Death seems a little like science fiction  
stealing you away in the middle  
of an afternoon — when we least expected it —  
& now when Death wants a snowfall it gets that  
too: white heaviness clinging  
to branches that break when they can't bear it anymore.

The poetry of living has abandoned me  
and I no longer know  
how to think  
about murders  
of children  
in South Africa  
or Ethiopia  
or anywhere.

As a young girl I read all of Thomas Hardy's novels  
cried over every death, every lost love, every dying sheep  
bleating for the tragedies of women:  
*Tess and Bathsheba*  
*Tess and Bathsheba*  
believed in a Fate they couldn't alter,  
women obsessed with it.

As I stare into darkness I recall meeting Death  
when I was eleven & our neighbour died,  
and later, when my father died on my birthday  
I felt abandoned and have ever since.  
I have forgotten the details of his face  
and the face of my brother who was killed  
at nineteen in a freak car accident,  
knowing it was murder, had danced  
with the murderer earlier in a country dream.

If I stand here long enough  
the sun will come up, snow blinding my eyes,  
water making its tracks down frosted glass,  
clearing a space,  
and promising everything,  
*just like she said.*

**JUDITH FITZGERALD**  
**Two Margarets**

*(In memory of Margaret Laurence and Margaret Pennock)*

Out of the endless lines of lassitude and liquid and silence  
rise up,  
meet zero and conquer the reversal of time, transcend  
negative  
gravity, relativity, culpability. The stillness settles, glimmers  
in the dusk of this dust-filled Key West day. Or days. I no  
longer know.  
Impossible, improbable, slowly I hear the telephone ring and  
I thrust  
forward through time: splitting seconds: Picasso's fractured  
motion.  
Trembling through blue air closing in black the white  
telephone  
telescoped at the end of my fingers and the voice in my ear  
I barely interpret. Language? This head-splitting stillness.  
Still.  
*She stands there still.* She lies now stilled. My arms form a  
cross  
  
of grief and I lean toward the future, the telephone, the tears  
slashing my wrists. My heart a gasp between stasis and oasis,  
my  
head a traitor, my hands weapons responsible for shattered  
stars.  
Astonished, terrified, bent into a delta of need I find I grieve  
so easily for this Margaret, this woman cursed by gifts,  
shredded by talent, ravaged by monstrous beauty, her

albatross  
of words. Yet, my own Margaret, my sister, for whom  
I could not weep, now scalds my eyes: A collage terrifying  
in its accepted familiarity. I cannot distinguish one, other;  
see only faces in black & white, faces forced to blanks.

*She stands there still.* Her hands folded beneath the  
beautiful reckless  
smile, her heart wide, searing the photograph until I cannot  
move  
my hands to repeat the ritual, cannot turn her face down,  
must look  
and look and try to find my sister in that brilliant moment  
she leaned  
forward and the fingers of her hands sang arias of motion.  
Margaret,  
my sister, may she rest in restless peace, her grave her  
cradle, her ashes  
her endless strength... *Now fades the glimmering land  
scape on the sight,*  
despite harsh pain and foolish propriety; I shall celebrate  
Love until Death  
*leaves the world to darkness and to me;* shall breathe the  
sharp breath  
no breath at all, will live with rich vengeance before The  
Fall.