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Reformation

Charis Southwell

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Reformation

CHARIS SOUTHWELL*

I

Underneath the pressed-marble foundations
They have buried the witches,
And in the dark library storerooms, they have put away the
myth.

Now the dark shape drifts up the stairs,
Stands on the rostrum, and conjures.

A chain of laughter moves around the cocktail party,
Light laughter like the clink of glass and ice
And the jingle of bracelet rings.
The smoke rises between us in a screen,
And everyone is gay except for you,
And you are restless and turn away
To look for nothing,
And could not tell me, if I asked you,
"Why?"

Dante rose out of his grave and passed a bar.
From the asylum where the air is a camouflage
And the intimacy impersonal, he heard Hell's music.

The well-dressed lady blushed and said,
"Would you mind if I call you Father?"
"Not at all, if it helps," he said.
The well-dressed lady bowed her head
And tried to find a way to tell.

When the storm lifts the litter from the streets
And screams around the buildings
Tearing at the wires and throwing down the leaves,
When the earth heaves and breaks itself,
And the sea comes in a great hand to slap the land,

*Mrs. Southwell is an alumna of Brigham Young University where she won several awards for her poetry.

The shadow rides upon the water
 And contorts his face in lightning
 For the pain of another power.

II

In my dreams I run until I am out there
 In the middle of everywhere, Wyoming,
 Where a hundred thousand voices sing the silence,
 And the clouds as big as giants expand their chests and roar!
 Where there is a stillness in between
 For the quiet things that sing in the smaller amplitudes
 And play on the fragile strings,
 Where only flowing water passes never hours
 And the undulance and coolness of the stream
 Share the lovely solitude of dreams.
 It is a myth the quiet place.
 I waken from the illusion of the schedule
 Into the shelter of the willow,
 The soothing moving of the water,
 And the warm enclosing arms of sun.

III

Idumea, Idumea, we have forgotten.
 The blur of pigeon wings moves into the evening,
 Following the day into the west,
 Dipping under the rose edge of the gray bowl
 And out into the ever-light.
 The great eye dims as earth turns beneath the aperture
 And closes away the blue.
 Plate-glass windows watch the white translucence
 Change through blue into the crystal black of night
 And sigh into the security of stars.

Idumea, Idumea, we have forgotten.
 The shadow hovers down so near
 We cannot see. We only feel the cold, like fear,
 Brush past, and wait and play to pass the time
 That's ticking faster than before,
 And the dark shape moves from door to door.
 Who knows when it has passed
 Or whether we are all dead at last?