

LOOKING AT JOYCE

-- for Father Boyle

"Henry for chrissake, get down outa that tree!" First it's warm, then it's freezing. Lately I can't write a thing, all these words keep getting in the way. How fat they are, you can't see around them! Now, Bach ... certainly not Tchaikovsky, that poor cripple, all he could do was dance, and you know what they say about male dancers. Odd that you should be Irish, last of the pagans. (Sleep with an Irishman, you'll never forget it.) Words, words, words! Remember the time we went to the mountains and danced? The sign said Fisher Flour and all of us burst into bloom, fourteen pansies holding up traffic on Interstate 40. "Oh yeah, Joyce, she wrote that great one about trees."

HURRY UP

Twenty years in the Academy and nothing to show for it. They keep sending me back for something I might have missed. Doctor, lawyer, you know, I've been nearly all of them. My friends and I run hard, urge each other on, "Hurry up! Hurry up! We want you up here with us." and I've got one leg up for that final leap and there it goes! my leg hurtles through space without me, forever, forever, there it goes, goodbye, what do I do now?

WHY I LIKE WATER, AND WILL DROWN

Its silver satin pillows welcome my life. I breathe it in, heir to everything. I am the richest man alive, now that I have nothing. Nothing can destroy me, not even fire. Flame can do nothing but make me rise. Risen, I gather among others of my kind and together we fall, the rain.

POEMS THAT ARE NOT PUBLISHED

-- for Michael Benedikt

are the result of your fooling around, all those poets, all those women, not to mention men, or the bastard children you have scattered all over the world, you will never know their names, they will call you Father in the night so clearly you can hear them now, even before they are born.