

From Hiroshima

Three Witnesses

Translated by Richard Minear
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Summer Flowers

WHEN I WENT OUT and bought flowers, it was with the intention of visiting my wife's grave. In my pocket was a bundle of incense sticks I had taken from the *butsudan*. August 15 would be the first *bon* since my wife's death; but I doubted that this hometown of mine would survive that long unscathed. It happened that the day was a no-electricity day; early that morning I saw no other men walking along carrying flowers. I do not know the proper name of the flowers; but with their small yellow petals, they had a nice country flavor about them, very summer-flower-like.

I splashed water on the gravestone standing exposed to the hot sun, divided the flowers into two bunches, and stuck them in the flower holders on either side. Once I had done so, the grave seemed somehow cleansed and purified, and for a moment I gazed at flowers and gravestone. Beneath this stone lay buried not only my wife's ashes, but also Father's and Mother's. After setting a match to the incense I had brought and bowing in silent respect, I took a drink of water at the well nearby. Then I walked home the roundabout way, via Nigitsu Park; that day and the next, the smell of incense clung to my pocket. It was on the third day that the atomic bomb fell.

I OWE MY LIFE to the fact that I was in the privy. The morning of August 6 I got out of bed at about eight o'clock. The air raid warning had sounded twice the previous night, but there had been no air raid; so before daybreak I had taken off all my clothes, changed for the first time in a while into sleepwear of *yukata* and shorts, and gone to sleep. When I got out of bed, I had on only the shorts. Catching sight of me, Sister complained about my having stayed in bed so long; without a word I went into the privy.

How many seconds later it happened I can't say, but all of a sudden there was a blow to my head, and everything went dark. I cried out instinctively and stood up, hand to my head. Things crashed as in a storm, and it was pitch dark; I didn't know what was going on. Grasping the handle and opening the door, I came out onto the ve-

The beginning of Summer Flowers, a work of non-fiction by victim Hara Tamiki

randa. Until that point, I was in agony: amid the hail of sound I had heard my own cry distinctly, but I couldn't see a thing. However, once out on the veranda I quickly saw, materializing in the thin light, a scene of destruction; my feelings too came into focus.

It was like something in the most horrible dream. Right from the start, when I received the blow to my head and things went black, I knew I wasn't dead. Then, thinking what an enormous inconvenience this all was, I tried to work myself up to anger. My cry sounded in my ear like someone else's voice. But as the situation around me, though still hazy, began to resolve itself, I soon felt as if I were standing on a stage that had been set for a tragedy. I had surely seen spectacles like this at the movies. Beyond the dense cloud of dust, there appeared patches of blue, and then the patches grew in number. Light came streaming in where walls had collapsed and from other unlikely directions. As I took a few tentative steps on the floorboards, from which the *tatami* had been sent flying, Sister flew toward me from across the way. "Not hurt? Not hurt? You're all right?" she cried. Then: "Your eye is bleeding; go wash it off right away," and she told me the water was running in the kitchen sink.

Realizing that I was utterly naked, I said, looking back at Sister, "Isn't there something for me to put on?" She produced some underpants from a closet that had survived the destruction. At that point someone rushed in making strange gestures. Face bloody and wearing only a shirt, he was one of the factory workers. He saw me, said over his shoulder, "You're lucky you weren't hurt," and went off busily, muttering, "Phone, phone, I must phone."

Cracks had opened everywhere; screens and *tatami* were scattered all about; bare joists and doorsills were plainly in sight; for some time a strange silence continued. The house seemed on its last legs. As I learned later, most houses in this area collapsed flat; but our second story did not fall, and the floor held firm. Probably because it was so solidly built. My father, a cautious person, had built it forty years ago.

Trampling on the jumble of *tatami* and sliding screens, I looked for something to put on. Right off I found a jacket; but as I was searching here and there for pants, my busy eye was caught by stuff lying scattered, in a mess. The book I had been reading, half-finished

last night, lay on the floor, pages curled up. Fallen from the lintel, a picture frame covered my bed, ominously. My canteen emerged out of the blue, and then I found my cap. My pants did not turn up, so I looked for something to put on my feet.

At that point K. from the office appeared on the veranda of the drawing room. On seeing me, he called in a pathetic voice, "Help! I'm hurt," and slumped to the floor. Blood was oozing from his forehead; tears glistened in his eyes.

I asked him, "Where are you hurt?" He replied, "My knee," pressing it and contorting his pale, wrinkled face. I gave him a piece of cloth that was there and pulled on two pairs of socks, one over the other.

"Look—smoke! Let's get out of here! Take me with you!" K. urged me repeatedly. Though a good deal older than I, K. was normally far more energetic; but even he was a little lost.

Surveying the scene from the veranda, I saw an expanse of rubble, the ruins of collapsed houses; except for the reinforced concrete building still standing in the middle distance, there wasn't even anything by which to get my bearings. The large maple next to the earthen wall—now toppled—of the garden had had its trunk snapped off halfway up, and the upper half of the tree had been thrown atop the outdoor washstand. Stooping over the air raid shelter, K. said, irrationally, "Shall we stick it out here? We've got water . . ."

"No," I said, "let's head for the river," and with a look of incomprehension, he cried, "River? Which way to the river, I wonder?"

As a matter of fact, even if we wished to flee, we still hadn't made any preparations for doing so. Pulling some pajamas out of a closet, I handed them to him and also tore down the veranda's blackout curtains. I picked up some cushions, too. When I turned over the *tatami* scattered on the veranda, my emergency kit came to light. Relieved, I slung it over my shoulder. Small red flames began to appear from the storehouse of the medicine factory next door. It was time to get out. The last to leave, I climbed over the wall alongside the maple tree, snapped off and broken.

That large maple had stood forever in the corner of the garden; when I was young, it had figured in my daydreams. After having been

away a long time, I had returned this spring to live in my old home; I had thought it odd, since returning, that the tree no longer held its old charm. Strangely, this whole city seemed to have lost its gentle naturalness, to have become a collection of cold inorganic matter. Each time I entered the room that looked out onto the garden, there had come floating into my mind, unbidden, the words, "The Fall of the House of Usher."

CLAMBERING over the ruins of the house and around what was in our way, K. and I proceeded at first quite slowly. Soon our feet came to level ground, so we knew that we had come out onto the road. Then we hurried briskly down the center of the road. From the other side of a flattened building came a voice crying, "Mister, please!" We turned, and a girl whose face was bloody came walking toward us; she was crying. Looking absolutely horror-stricken, she followed us for all she was worth, calling, "Help!" We went on a while and met an old woman standing squarely in our way in the road, weeping like a child: "The house is burning! The house is burning!" Smoke was rising here and there among the ruins, but suddenly we came to a place where tongues of flame licked at us fiercely. Running, we got past that spot, and the road became level again; we had come to the foot of Sakae Bridge. Here refugees had gathered in droves. Someone on top of the bridge was being a hero: "Those of you who are up to it—form a bucket brigade!" I took the road in the direction of the bamboo grove at the Izumi Villa and at this point became separated from K.

The bamboo grove had been blown flat, but the press of people fleeing had opened a path. I looked up at the trees; most of them, too, had been snapped off partway up. This historic garden flanking the river: it too was now covered with wounds. Suddenly I noticed the face of a middle-aged woman who was squatting next to the shrubs, her fleshy body slumped over. Wholly devoid of life, her face seemed even as I watched to become infected with something. This was my first encounter with such a face. But thereafter I was to see countless faces more grotesque still.

Where the grove joined the riverbank, I came upon a bunch of schoolgirls. They had fled here from the factory, all lightly injured;

they still trembled from the vividness of the event that had only just taken place before their very eyes, yet they chattered all the more spiritedly. At that point my eldest brother turned up. Wearing only a shirt and carrying a beer bottle in one hand, he seemed at first glance uninjured. On the opposite bank, too, as far as the eye could see, buildings had collapsed, and only telephone poles still stood; the fire was already spreading. When I sat down on the narrow path on the riverbank, I felt, despite everything, that I was now safe. What had hung over our heads for so long, what in time surely had to come, had come. There was nothing left to fear; I myself had survived. Before, I had given myself an even chance of dying; now, the fact that I was alive took my breath away.

I thought to myself: I must set these things down in writing. However, at that time I still had virtually no idea of the true state of things brought about by this air raid.

THE FIRE on the opposite bank had grown in force. The heat was being reflected all the way over to our side, so we repeatedly soaked the cushions in the river, which was at high tide, and covered our heads with them. Meanwhile, someone shouted, "Air raid!" A voice said, "Those wearing white hide under the trees," and people responded by crawling, all of them, into the center of the bamboo grove. On the other side of the grove, too, with the sun pouring down, it looked as if a fire was burning. With bated breath I waited for a while, but it didn't appear that an air raid was coming; so I came out again on the river side of the grove. The fire on the opposite bank had not lessened in force. A hot wind blew over our heads, and, fanned across toward us, black smoke came as far as mid-river. Suddenly the sky overhead seemed to have turned black, and large drops of rain came pouring down, a torrent. The rain dampened the fire a bit in our vicinity, but in a while the sky turned cloudless again. The fire on the opposite bank burned on. Now, on this bank, I saw my eldest brother, Sister, and two or three acquaintances from the neighborhood; we all drew together, and each of us gave his account of the morning's events.

When the bomb fell, my brother was at the table in the office. A brilliant light flashed through the garden, and immediately thereafter

he was sent flying six feet or so; trapped under the building, he struggled for a while. Noticing a gap at last and crawling out, he became aware that over at the factory the schoolgirls were screaming for help. He struggled mightily to get them out. Sister was at the entryway when she saw a brilliant flash and quickly took cover under the stairs, so she was not injured badly. Each of us had been convinced at first that only his own house had been bombed; when we did go outside, we were flabbergasted to see that the same thing had happened everywhere. We were also amazed that while everything aboveground had collapsed, there were no holes that looked like bomb craters. Sister said it had happened soon after the lifting of the preliminary alert. There had been a brilliant flash and a soft hissing, like the sound of magnesium burning, and instantaneously everything had turned upside down . . . just like black magic, she said, trembling.

As the fire on the other bank began to die down, a voice said the trees in this garden had caught fire. A faint smoke began to be visible high in the sky over the bamboo grove behind us. The water in the river was still at full tide and gave no indication of falling. I walked along the stone wall and climbed down to the water's edge. Just at my feet, a large wooden crate came floating past, and onions that had spilled out of the crate were bobbing about. I pulled the box over, grabbed onion after onion out of it, and handed them to people on the bank. On the railway bridge upstream a freight train had derailed, and this box, thrown out, had floated down. While hauling in onions, I heard a voice crying, "Help!" A young girl was floating past in the middle of the river holding on to a piece of wood, her head sometimes above the water, sometimes under it. I picked out a big log and swam out, pushing it ahead of me. I hadn't swum in a long time, but I was able, more easily than I would have thought, to rescue her.

The fire on the opposite bank had slackened for a while but suddenly started raging again. This time dark smoke appeared in the midst of the red flames, and the black mass spread savagely; even as we watched, the temperature of the flames seemed to rise. But even that eerie blaze too gradually burned itself out; when it did, only empty shells of buildings remained to be seen. It was then that I noticed, in the sky downstream above the middle of the river, an abso-

lutely translucent layer of air trembling and moving toward us. A tornado, I thought; at that very moment violent winds were already blowing overhead. The trees and plants all around me trembled; suddenly, I saw many trees above my head sucked up by the wind, just like that, and carried off into the sky. Dancing crazily in the air, the trees fell into the midst of the maelstrom with the force of arrows. I don't remember clearly what color the surrounding air was. But I think we must have been enveloped in the dreadfully gloomy faint green light of the medieval paintings of Buddhist hell.

Once this twister had passed, a kind of twilight obtained, and my second brother, who hadn't appeared until then, unexpectedly came to where we were. His face was streaked with gray; the back of his shirt was torn, too. The marks on his skin looked as if he had gotten sunburned at the beach; later, they developed into real burns that suppurated and required several months of treatment. But at the moment he was still pretty fit. He said he had just returned home on an errand when he spotted a small airplane high in the sky and then saw three strange flashes. He was thrown a good six feet. He rescued his wife and the maid, both of whom had been pinned under and were struggling; he entrusted the two children to the maid and sent them fleeing ahead of him; then he rescued the old man next door, which took longer than he expected.

My sister-in-law was very worried about the children from whom she had become separated, but then the maid called from the other bank. Her arms hurt, she said, and she was no longer able to carry the children; please come quickly.

The trees of the Izumi Villa were burning, a few at a time. We'd be in trouble if the fire burned its way here after dark; we wanted to cross to the opposite shore while it was still light. But there was no boat to be seen. My eldest brother and his family decided to cross to the other shore via the bridge; still searching for a boat, my second brother and I went up the river. As we proceeded up the narrow stone path running along the river, I saw for the first time a group of people defying description. The rays of sunlight, already slanting, cast a wan light on the surrounding scene; there were people both on top of the bank and below it, and their shadows fell on the water.

What kind of people? . . . Their faces were so swollen and crumpled that it was impossible to tell which were men and which women; their eyes were narrowed to slits; their lips were festering horribly. Baring their hideously painful arms and legs, they lay on their sides, more dead than alive. As we passed in front of them, these monstrous people called to us in thin soft voices. "Please give me a little water to drink!" or "Please help me!"—every last one appealed to us.

I was stopped by someone calling "Mister!" in a sharp, pitiful voice. In the river just there I saw the naked corpse of a boy, entirely submerged; and on the stone steps less than a yard away crouched two women. Their faces were swollen to about half again normal size, deformed and ugly, leaving only their burned and tangled hair as a sign that they were women. At first sight, rather than pity, I felt my hair stand on end. When these women saw that I had stopped, they pleaded with me: "That blanket over there by the trees is ours; won't you please bring it here?"

Over there by the trees there was indeed something that looked like a blanket. But on top of it lay a badly injured person on the point of death, and there was nothing I could do.

We found a small raft, so we untied the rope and rowed toward the other bank. By the time the raft landed on the sandy beach on the other bank, night had already fallen; but here too, it seemed, many injured were waiting. One soldier who had been crouching at the river's edge pleaded, "Give me some hot water to drink!" so I made him lean on my shoulder as we walked on. In pain, he tottered forward over the sand, and then he muttered as if in utter despair, "I'd be better off dead." I agreed sadly but said nothing. It was as if unbearable resentment against this absurdity bound us together; we needed no words. Partway there I had him wait, and looked up from the base of the stone wall to the emergency stand with its supply of hot water; it had been set up on top of the embankment. At the place on the stand from which steam rose, a large head, burned black, was grasping a teabowl and slowly drinking hot water. The huge grotesque face seemed to me made entirely of black beans. What is more, the hair on its head had been cut off in a straight line just at the ear. (Later, as I saw people with burns, hair cut off in a straight line, I came to realize

that their hair had been burned off right up to the line of their caps.) I got a bowl of water and carried it back to where I had left the soldier. In the river a single soldier, seriously injured, was squatting, drinking his fill of river water.

In the dusk the sky above the Izumi Villa and the fire in our immediate vicinity loomed brilliantly; on the sandy shore some people were even burning bits of wood to cook supper. A woman had been stretched out right beside me for some time, face swollen like a spongy balloon; from her voice pleading for water I recognized her for the first time as the maid from my second brother's house. Carrying the baby, she had been about to set out from the kitchen when the flash caught her, burning her face, chest, and hands. Then, taking with her the eldest daughter and the baby, she had fled just ahead of my brother and his wife; but at the bridge she had become separated from the girl and had reached the riverbank here carrying only the baby. The hand that had been injured when she first tried to shield her face from the flash, she complained, that hand still hurt as badly now as if it were being wrenched off.

The tide was now rising, so we left the riverbed and moved toward the embankment. Night had fallen; crazed voices echoed from this side and that, crying, "Water! Water!" The clamor of those still left behind on the riverbed gradually grew more insistent. On top of the embankment a breeze stirred, and it was a little chilly for sleeping. Immediately across the way was Nigitsu Park; it too was now enclosed in darkness, only the faint outlines of broken tree trunks visible. My brother and his family were lying in a hollow in the ground; I found another hollowed out place and crawled into it. Lying right next to me were three or four injured schoolgirls.

Someone was worried and said, "The trees across the way have caught fire; wouldn't we be better off fleeing?" I emerged from my hollow and looked across. The flames were flashing in the trees two or three hundred yards away, but they didn't seem about to come toward us.

"Is the fire burning our way?" an injured young girl asked me, trembling.

"No," I told her, "we're okay," and she had another question: "What time is it now—not twelve yet?"

The preliminary alert sounded. Somewhere there must have been an undamaged siren, for one reverberated faintly. Downstream there was a glow, vast and hazy: the fire in the city must still be going strong.

The schoolgirls sighed: "Ah, if only morning would come!"

In soft, gentle voices they sang in chorus, "Father! Mother!"

"Is the fire burning our way?" the injured young girl asked me again.

At the riverbed could be heard the dying gasps of someone apparently quite young and strong. Echoing on all sides, his voice carried everywhere. "Water, water, water, please! . . . Oh! . . . Mother! . . . Sister! . . . Mit-chan!": the words poured out as if he were being torn body and soul; interspersed between the words, forced out of him by the pain, were faint groans of "Ooh, ooh!" —Once when I was a child I walked along this embankment to fish from this riverbank. The memory of that entire hot day still remains strangely vivid. On the sand is a large billboard for Lion toothpaste; from time to time, off in the direction of the railway bridge, I hear the roar of trains crossing. It is a scene peaceful as in a dream . . . //

WHEN DAWN CAME, last night's voice was stilled. Its bloodcurdling death cry seemed to linger in my ear; yet the light was full, and a morning breeze was blowing. My eldest brother and Sister went around to the charred ruins of our house, and since people said there was an aid station in the East Parade Ground, my second brother and his family set off for there. I too was about to head for the East Parade Ground when the soldier next to me asked to go along. This hefty soldier must have been pretty badly injured; leaning on my shoulder, he went forward on his own legs one hesitant step at a time, just as if carrying something fragile. What is more, ours was a terrible, ominous path: fragments and splinters and corpses, still smoldering. When we got to Tokiwa Bridge, he was tired out and told me to leave him because he couldn't take another step. So I left him there and proceeded alone in the direction of Nigitsu Park. In some places

Prelude

Bring back the fathers! Bring back the mothers!
Bring back the old people!
Bring back the children!

Bring me back!
Bring back the human beings I had contact with!

For as long as there are human beings, a world of human beings,
bring back peace,
unbroken peace.

August 6

That brilliant flash—who can forget it?
In a split second, 30,000 in the streets vanished;
the screams of 50,000 pinned under in pitch black
died away.

The churning yellow smoke thinned to reveal Hiroshima:
buildings split, bridges fallen,
packed streetcars burned,
an endless heap of rubble and embers.
Soon a procession of the naked, crying, walking in bunches,
trampling on brain matter:
charred clothes about waists,
skin hanging like rags
from arms raised to breasts.

Corpses at the Parade Ground, scattered about like stone statues;
at the river's edge, too, fallen in a heap, a group that had crawled
toward a tethered raft,
turning gradually, under the burning rays of the sun, into corpses;
in the glare of the flames piercing the night sky,
the area where Mother and Brother were pinned under alive—
it too went up in flames.

In the feces and urine on the floor of the arsenal
a group of schoolgirls who had fled lay fallen;
bellies swollen like drums, blinded in one eye,
skin half-gone, hairless, impossible to tell
one from the other—
by the time the rays of the morning sun picked them out,
they had all stopped moving;

amid the stagnant stench, the only sound:
flies buzzing about metal washbasins.

The stillness that reigned over the city of 300,000:
who can forget it?
In that hush
the white eyes of dead women and children
sent us
a soul-rending appeal:
who can forget it?

Dying

!

Loud in my ear: screams.
Soundlessly welling up,
pouncing on me:
space, all upside-down.
Hanging, fluttering clouds of dust
smelling of smoke,
and, running madly about, figures.

“Ah,
get out
of here!”

Scattering fragments of brick,
I spring to my feet;
my body’s
on fire.

The hot blast
that blew me down from behind
set sleeves, shoulders
on fire.

Amid the smoke I grab
a corner of the cement water tank;
my head—
already in.

The clothes I splash water on
burn, drop off:
gone.

Wires, boards, nails, glass,
a rippling wall of tiles.

Fingernails burn;
heels—gone;
plastered to my back: a sheet of molten lead.

“Owww!”

Flames already

blacken;
telephone poles, walls, too.
Eddies
of flame and smoke
blow down on my broken head.
"Hiro-chan! Hiro-chan!"
Press hand to breast:
ah—a bloody cotton hole.
Fallen, I cry—
Child! Child! Child! Where are you?
Amid the smoke that crawls along the ground—
where could they have come from?—
hand in hand,
round and round as in the *bon* dance,
naked girls:
one falls, all fall.
From under tiles,
someone else's shoulder:
a hairless old woman,
driven up by the heat,
writhing, crying shrilly.
Beside the road where flames already flicker,
stomachs distended like great drums,
even their lips torn off:
lumps of red flesh.
A hand that grabs my ankle
slips off, peels off.
An eyeball that pleads at my feet.
A head boiled white.
Hair, brain matter my hand presses down on.
Steamy smoke; fiery air that rushes at me.
Amid the darkness of flying sparks:
children's eyes, the color of gold.
Burning body,
scalding throat;
arm

that suddenly collapses;
shoulder
that sinks to the ground.
Oh, I can go
no farther.
In the lonely dark,
the thunder in my ears suddenly fades.
Ah!
Why?
Why here
by the side of the road
cut off, dear, from you;
why
must
I
die
?

Flames

Pushing up through smoke
from a world half-darkened
by overhanging cloud—
the shroud that mushroomed out
and struck the dome of the sky,
the angry flames—
black, red, blue—
dance into the air,
merge,
scatter glittering sparks,
already tower
over the whole city.

Quivering like seaweed,
the mass of flames spurts forward.
Cattle bound for the slaughterhouse
avalanche down the riverbank;
wings drawn in, a single ash-colored pigeon
lies on its side atop the bridge.
Popping up in the dense smoke,
crawling out
wreathed in fire:
countless human beings
on all fours.
In a heap of embers that erupt and subside,
hair rent,
rigid in death,
there smolders a curse.

After that concentrated moment
of the explosion,
pure incandescent hatred
spreads out, boundless.

Blank silence
piles up into the air.

The hot rays of uranium
that shouldered the sun aside
burn onto a girl's back
the flowered pattern of thin silk,
set instantaneously ablaze
the black garb of the priest—

August 6, 1945:

that midday midnight
man burned the gods
at the stake.

Hiroshima's

'night of fire

casts its glow over sleeping humanity;

before long

history will set an ambush

for all who would play God.

Blind

From under the pile of rubble on the riverbank—
all that's left of the maternity hospital—
men who had been visiting their wives
drag themselves—arms, legs—
down to a barge at the stone embankment.

In darkness brought on by the splinters of glass
that attacked chests and faces,
the beached barge is daubed with sparks.
Driven by the heat,
the blind stagger down to the riverbed;
staggering feet
slip in the mud and fall.

Above the knot of fallen men,
Hiroshima burns silently,
burns and crumbles;
already here—evening high tide.

In the riverbed the water rises,
comes full,
covers arms, covers legs;
salt water seeps into the countless open wounds
of people who no longer move.

In the blackness of flickering consciousness,
nerves that grope for sensations no longer there
strike against an exploding curtain—the flash of light—
and burn out
once more.

As arms, legs begin to float,
senses that survived all the destruction are wrenched off;

inside log-like bodies, burned black, that tumble into the river
glimmer afterimages of life:

the smile of a wife with her newborn child;
breakfast at the window of the delivery room.

Now two eyeballs
gouged out by flying glass
reflect
bloody pus and mud,
a rift in the clouds and smoke,
and the evening light over the mountains.

At the Makeshift Aid Station

You girls—
weeping even though there is no place for tears to come from;
crying out even though you have no lips to shape the words;
reaching out even though there is no skin on your fingers
to grasp with—
you girls.

Oozing blood and greasy sweat and lymph, your limbs twitch;
puffed to slits, your eyes glitter whitely;
only the elastic bands of your panties hold in your swollen bellies;
though your private parts are exposed, you are
wholly beyond shame:
to think
that a little while ago
you all were pretty schoolgirls!

Emerging from the flames that flickered gloomily
in burned-out Hiroshima
no longer yourselves,
you rushed out, crawled out one after the other,
struggled along to this grassy spot,
in agony laid your heads, bald but for a few wisps of hair,
on the ground.

Why must you suffer like this?
Why must you suffer like this?
For what reason?
For what reason?
You girls
don't know

how desperate your condition,
how far transformed from the human.

You are simply thinking,
thinking
of those who until this morning
 were your fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters
(would any of them know you now?)
and of the homes in which you slept, woke, ate
(in that instant the hedgeroses were torn off; who knows
 what has become of their ashes?)

thinking, thinking—
as you lie there among friends who one after the other
 stop moving—
thinking
of when you were girls,
human beings.