

Isaiah's Elations

I

There is nothing here except the song of flies
Hovering over still pools by dangling barbed wires
The sun cracking seams along wheated spires
Their taupe coat combed by a wind that clarifies
A brush of red beneath. Nothing here
Except that vast distance of particulates
Veiling the valley in a milky blue that sets
The mountains apart and freely floating there
With the evergreen stubble and raphaelite folds
Of their muscled face. Nothing but dry air
Milling through signs of an ancestral hold
On this place: skeletal irrigation pipes rolled
To a halt among rusted machines, barns without care
That lie broken. Nothing left to compare
To milk and honey, for which our birthright was sold.

II

There is no joy in this new day unless
We see more than what our hands hold before us
The life of the still unlovely mind made flesh
Its hall of mirrors, muffles the pleading chorus
Of the desert. The prophet's metered promise
Calmed the fear of burying another child
Yet settlement exiled us from wild
Wonder at our primal homelessness.
Perhaps American Beauty never depended
On *deus ex machina*, but foreseeing ourselves
In the act of deciphering the quickening light
Drawing the brilliance of these colors into sight
With pencil and brush we catch what twilight saves
We scratch as it bleeds before the day has ended
Rootedness depends at what angle our mind reposes
For there's always been nothing here but the song of roses.

—George B. Handley