

14. *The Work Song* Copyright © 2011 Richard Lawrence Norman

Who among you has worked?  
So alone was I in my happiness  
Circling the arch of heaven  
Frigid pure and empty—a hollow filled with light  
Circling... waiting.

Soul and spirit was I  
Mire and light  
Height ground into dirt, human and whole  
Beneath the question  
Unanswered and unasked, living and unborn...  
Worthless and unspent  
Is the unworn coin of Man  
All that might be—but is not  
So is the worthless promise of Man!

In contempt did I find him and myself  
... Below myself  
Willing to look and sick to see  
Are the eyes of Wisdom!  
Unblinking are his horrified eyes, to see  
The wan pallid cheeks of lazy bloodless shame  
To see—and know  
What must be done!

Who among you has worked?  
I am full and rejoicing  
Alone in my happiness  
Circling the arch of heaven  
I wait, wonder of another, one yet unborn  
... and wonder  
Who among you has worked?  
So do I speak to shadows and wait for you.

Sick and wan, white and thin to know  
I gathered my spirit and rose above my soul  
Stepped down, ground the weighted heel of my spirit  
Upon and into my soul—and stood.  
Raised up, beyond the torn ruin of my soul  
I began to climb  
Wearing and rubbing my sick soul  
Grinding holes into the very heart of Man  
Rubbing the worthless tatters of my soul through  
Trodden under and ground through  
A wound rubbed into dirt,  
Cast under the heel of my rising spirit!

Free and golden  
A rising splash of light folds through itself  
New and pure, loft and light  
Stretching upward, climbing up into itself and burst through  
Through the liquid Sun pouring down  
Ascending into those pure heights  
Which even the Sun must flee... falling through  
Toward the needful Earth.  
That place from which I rise  
A splash of color more buoyant than light  
Falling upward...  
Away from the soul of Man!

How empty was I  
Circling in my pure chill heaven  
Lonely and hollow,  
A single spirit  
Empty and pure  
Rising up over my ruined spent soul  
... Frigid, pure and empty  
A hollow filled with light... waiting.

Oh how lonely is one now worthy!  
His soul burnt into a hot wind  
Upon which his spirit rises  
Welcomed into the clear azure bell  
The cracked arching blue ice  
Into which he flees from his burnt soul!  
How lonely to be a perfect hollow  
A self creation  
A pure spirit  
Floating above your soul!  
Such is the empty bliss of the most distant sky  
Alluring, hollow, perfect and soulless.

So I did sweep down to find my soul  
Worn and choked  
A ruin upon which my spirit had tread  
Worn through and dying, choked and fouled  
Mired in filth and black with the marks of my heel  
Oh how necrotic was my forgotten soul  
Oh what of man need be ruined  
For his spirit to spill up into heaven!

We who have worked have torn our soul  
Plucked it from our sluggish human breast  
... And burnt it into wind.  
Never mind its howling cries  
Its shuddering lament, dying and crushed

Under the heavy footfall of my relentless rising spirit  
Never mind the sky is filled with slapping cries  
Stained with soul's blood  
We will climb beyond even the blood soaked clouds  
Over all that which is below us,  
Dripping with soul's blood.  
So did my spirit demand!

Now I place my tender soul into my palm  
My spirit sweetly whispering of heaven  
Pure and alone...  
Now filled, round and warm  
Of spirit and soul  
Labors wings spread and sheltering  
My worthy wounded soul  
Slipping into the azure curve of a welcoming heaven  
Gracious and nourishing is the day unfurled  
Before one who is worthy  
One who has earned wings for his spirit  
And may buoy his soul sweetly aloft  
To fill his singing spirit  
Circling above the trodden Earth,  
Above the soul of Man  
Unseen, perfect and complete.

Alone and complete, I climb  
Farther and farther from the soul of Man.  
It is beyond myself, beyond this sunken time  
Over which I rise, that I look,  
My eyes upon your horizon... my unborn friend.  
Only your future shadow will join me  
Yes, that I know  
For only we have earned this happiness  
Rising together over the soul of Man  
Two eagles, alone and complete  
Companions separated by the years  
Joined together by this slender thread of words  
A silver strand of web cast aloft  
My song of joy written in your name  
... Circling the arch of heaven,  
Frigid, pure and empty,  
A hollow filled with light,  
Circling... Waiting.