

SUSAN STILES

To Guillaume IX

(Free adaptation of *Faray un vers de dreit nien*)

Let us write a poem about nothing
at all, not about us nor anyone else,
not about love nor youth nor anything.

Let us write it on the open plain.
I don't know exactly when I was born,
nor who my family is, anymore. I am not
a nomad yet I have no home. I am not like
nor unlike you and I don't know how to be
otherwise. I was visited at night by a fairy
on a high mountain.

I don't know when I fall asleep or when I
wake up unless someone tells me.
I have no curtains on my windows. I do not
delight in sun or moon or stars. I sleep best
under the rim of freezer jars.

I don't know the difference between
low tides and high ones. I cannot
use a telephone anymore. My mode
of transportation is never the same
yet it never varies. I don't know
where the only place to eat is
in this town.

I don't know if the earth is round or flat, and I do not care. I cannot stand upright anymore anyway. My back accepted an invitation from a snake. I have three rose gardens if I have any.

Ship lights never mark my path. I am unwanted in most galleys and my best game of tennis was years ago. I can sit on a fence post and not even know it. The old clocks I found were no longer mine.

The ashes in the fire have returned to tinder. Whether yesterday was tearful or joyful I cannot remember. My clothes have holes where they are not worn. I do the St. Vitus dance on an icy shelf. I am a facsimile of myself.

My grammar is poor
and my dictionary
has gone sour.

I am sick. I will likely die.
I don't know what to believe.
I've sought out a doctor but I
cannot remember who it is. If
I am cured, I will not be better.

I have a lover whom
I don't know because
I've never seen him.
He's never brightened
nor burdened me.
What's the difference.
I invite no one into my home.
I've never seen him yet
I love him with all my heart.

If I don't see him I feel fine,
It's not worth a dime,
I know someone who is even
more handsome, more gallant.

I know where he lives,
but I don't dare say.
I keep silent.
I know where he is
every moment of the day
and I grieve when he goes
and when he stays.

To him I have absolutely nothing to
say. Our conversation never ends.
I could wrap my tongue around a
peasant's head if I had not cut it out
long ago. I bake cookies in the oven
for the dead and I rejoice when a purge
turns the waters red.

This poem was made
I don't know by whom.
I will send it to you
as it was sent to me;
to unlock it perhaps
you possess
the correct key.