

## Conscience

“...Caught in the dangerous traffic between self and universe.”

Stanley Kunitz

I carve out a small space, a nest  
Of sorts and lie my conscience down to rest.  
As a gift it bears little resemblance to  
The madness around me, those who think  
They know everything, those who despair.

My own absurd, hesitant, presumption is hope.

I watch the Osprey hunt the harbor at dusk,  
It soars and glides to a frantic wing-beat  
And like an acrobat hangs in mid-air,  
As the flash of silver scales below  
Signals it is time to make a precision dive.

My own hesitant presumption is hope.

As an infant flails, wails, loss of womb,  
Its wet, loud, pronouncement – I am here!  
My conscience, not newborn, nor single-  
Minded like the Fish Hawk, hears the cry  
Of the wounded heart.

My own presumption is hope

Even as deadly fog shrouds the backstage,  
It is no match for these awakenings are legion,  
New dimensions of spirit and soul  
Rise from sweet hearth and beloved earth,  
Feminine and divine.

My own hope  
Lies in Mahler's 1<sup>st</sup>, from minor to major,  
From darkness to Frère Jacques. So rise  
Tired traveler, renew, seek the secret places,  
The great percussion of possibilities within.<sup>i</sup>

Peter Karoff  
July 2006

---

<sup>i</sup> The theme from the folk song Frère Jacques is central to Gustav Mahler's 1<sup>st</sup> Symphony. The composer described the finale of the work as, "The cry of the wounded heart."