

THE LIVES OF THE CHILDREN

The cloud is free only to go with the wind.

The rain is free only in falling.

~ Wendell Berry

Born to lightning,
we reaped love and warp,
returned to the empty lot, to the advent
of democracy. We dug a fortress,
burrowed under an orange tree,
exposed the roots and inhaled the incense
of worm. Our lives hid among ghosts,
took shelter with dirty magazines
tied by a string and buried.

Pigeons scatter. Children flee
the cupola and their wings,
bearing *mea culpas* on their backs.
In street and meadow, mountain and tower,
they climb the ladder of heaven
never again to be warrior or angel.

One caught valley fever, another returned
to the womb and drowned,
others let go because
they'd had enough,
too much misery or bliss, others
were lost in the marshes of Vietnam,
or at the end of a defibrillated neighborhood.

Separate, apart, each of the other—
we are a single attraction,
a resistance, a theft,
a map of plunder in relief.

With the fullness of our arms,
we join the exiled and the wind.

Afraid to look, may we seek,
dark angel, the favor of your eyes?