

The CLOWN

THE CLOWN WHO CAME DOWN TO AMUSE THE CHILDREN
WAS DRESSED IN A RAINBOW, HAD A STEEPLE FOR A HAT
AND ORANGE-SPOTTED COFFINS FOR SHOES

THE CLOWN BEGAN TO TELL THE CHILDREN STORIES
OF PRINCES, AND FAIRIES, AND BIRTHDAYS
BUT THE HOLLOW-EYED CHILDREN DID NOT LAUGH
(PERHAPS THEY COULD NOT LAUGH)

THE CLOWN PLAYED ON A SILVER FLUTE
A CLOWNSONG OLD AS WATER
BUT THE CHILDREN SAT WITH RIBS FULL OF QUICKSAND
AND THEY DID NOT LAUGH

THE CLOWN DID HIS DANCE
NOW A GRINNING SCARECROW PERFORMING FOR AN AUDIENCE
OF WEEDS AND NAMELESS STONES
SOME BUTTONS BRIGHT AS PASSION
WERE SHAKEN TO THE GROUND
BUT THE CHILDREN DID NOT GRAB FOR THEM

THEY STARED WITH DAGGER EYES
AND DID NOT LAUGH

THE CLOWN COULD NOT HELP WEeping NOW
TEARS OF RED, AND YELLOW, AND GREEN
RAN LIKE MELTED CANDY
FROM EYES THAT KNEW TOO MUCH
OF CHILDREN WHO NEVER LAUGHED

WITH MOUTHS FULL OF THORNS AND CRUSTED RAKES OF FINGERS
THE CHILDREN, LAUGHING NOW, SEIZED THE SCREAMING CLOWN
THEY TOOK HIS LIMBS AND HEART AND BOWELS
TO BE FED UPON IN CAVES UNKNOWN TO LIGHT

THE CLOWN'S HEAD LAY IN A DITCH
SHADOWS NOW CONFUSING CLOWN'S PAINTED SMILE
AND MAN'S WOUNDS
AND GAZING TOWARDS UNCARING STARS
EYES NOW UNSEEING
SWOLLEN WITH LOVE AND TEARS