

Leonard Cohen, To A Teacher

(Leonard Cohen)

[Dedicated to A. M. Klein (1909-1972)]

Hurt once and for all into silence.
A long pain ending without a song to prove it.
Who could stand beside you so close to Eden,
When you glinted in every eye the held-high
razor, shivering every ram and son?
And now the silent loony bin, where
The shadows live in the rafters like
Day-weary bats,
Until the turning mind, a radar signal,
lures them to exaggerate
Mountain-size on the white stone wall
Your tiny limp.
How can I leave you in such a house?
Are there no more saints and wizards
to praise their ways with pupils,
No more evil to stun with the slap
of a wet red tongue?
Did you confuse the Messiah in a mirror
and rest because he had finally come?
Let me cry Help beside you, Teacher.
I have entered under this dark roof
As fearlessly as an honoured son
Enters his father's house.