

KATHLEEN SZOKE  
**IN THE BODY**

Everything begins in the body, and ends,  
engagement and retreat, generation and degeneration  
and our hands curve in the shape of a bowl.

Kisses are passed from mouth to mouth  
like secrets we keep from ourselves;  
everything begins in the body, and ends.

Freckles scatter like stars across our skin,  
we trace the patterns of our lives on each other's bodies  
and our hands curve in the shape of a bowl.

Arms and legs extend us from our centre  
reaching, entangling us in other lives;  
everything begins in the body, and ends.

Eyes search out the mirror of other eyes,  
tears carry our salt to the skin of the other  
and our hands curve in the shape of a bowl.

Entropy inevitable, as order devolves to chaos,  
our original perfection declines;  
everything begins in the body, and ends,  
and our hands curve in the shape of a bowl.

## April 1967

—For Marianne S.

We were ten  
and we had never met  
I learned your face  
from a composition of tiny grey dots  
precocious child reading the paper from front to back  
— they thought I only read the comics, I suppose

They searched for you in woods and fields  
I searched for you in newsprint and ink  
day after day  
— but we never found you  
only a single blue running shoe by the side of the road

I thought of you as I walked down the street  
looking over my shoulder for dark blue station wagons  
I thought of you as I jumped rope at recess and  
as I ate my tuna casserole at supper-time and  
as I lay waiting for sleep in the safety of clean cotton sheets

We hadn't known before  
what there was to fear in the world  
but you had learned that now  
No one spoke and I could not ask  
I knew only that it was something  
too terrible for the papers to name  
And then I realized  
— they were no longer looking for you  
only a body they expected to find in the ground.

You are still ten and I am not  
I imagine the man you would have married  
I see echoes of the children you never had  
in the faces of my own  
I look for you in faces our age  
on the street, in the grocery store  
But your bones are still there  
in the place we never found  
in the cold dark soil that has cradled you for all these years  
covered with a blanket of brown leaves.