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# Reincarnation, Goodbye: 1992

Constance Urdang

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# Two Poems

CONSTANCE URDANG

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## Reincarnation

It takes a long time  
For the kindling to catch in the cold fireplace;  
Those poor twisted sticks  
Suffering an eruption of lichen  
Like the symptom of an infectious disease,  
Had to come a long way across the desert  
Tied in a rough bundle on the back  
Of a poor animal greedy for even a mouthful  
Of grass from the householder's lawn.

In another life I might have been the wood-wife  
Plodding dumbly in broken shoes,  
Or I might come back as a burro,  
Or even one of these sticks  
Waiting to burst into an apotheosis of flame.

## Goodbye, 1992

—for A.M.F.

What a sad song the hangers are singing  
In the empty closet;  
I had not thought one more goodbye  
Could leave such a hollow place,  
Echoing like a cave visited only  
By lizards and bats.

The silence blunders from wall to wall  
Like a huge trapped bird,  
And somewhere a faucet is dripping.  
What a trite story! Outside the window  
The same street that was there yesterday  
Lies waiting, doglike, for a familiar footstep.

Across the vast concave bowl of the sky  
A tiny plane is inscribing a farewell message  
In letters already garbled by the wind,  
And I remember standing in the room,  
Comfortless and small, where Keats died,  
Believing himself already forgotten.