

CHILD ON THE PRAIRIE

Child on the prairie, what do you see
hidden between the grains of wheat?
What are found on those stone tablets
you found where the four winds meet?
And where are the places you have been
to get such blisters on your feet?

Child on the prairie, what have you heard,
what are the sayings of the dead?
Have you stooped low and tasted of
the waters filled with floating lead?
And do you really understand
the message lying in a spider's web?

Child on the prairie, what do you speak?
What profound words come from your mouth!
Oh, why do you compare mankind
to dead leaves that have fallen about?
And what hold you in your small palm
that we mortals will all die without?

Child on the prairie, why do you cry?
Have you not caught up to tomorrow yet?
Is it because the old man you followed
did not know and had not really led?
Or is it the pain of your blood
around the crown of thorns on your head?

Child on the prairie, why do you go,
Why follow the flight of the hawk?
Don't kick topsoil into the wind,
please pick up your feet as you walk.
Why do you want to delay morning?
Why do you silence the crow of the cock?

Child on the prairie, why do you die?
Why does your open chest bleed?
Why are you sinking to the earth
under the cruel weight death has freed?
You will not return to your heaven
and no one will continue your seed.

Child on the prairie, now you are dead:
All of the lead has sunk through the waves
The cock has been butchered behind the barn,
and tomorrow has fallen behind today;
the winds have stopped, the stone tablets broken;
and all of us, the leaves, have drifted away.

Feb 1979