

Poems to a Newborn Son

Hino, 1981–1983

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1

On a starless night
I baptized you
with three cold drops of rain.

2

His shirt's no bigger
than a handkerchief,
but his eyes are wide
and as brown as the earth.

3

He licks his lips
and gurgles,
tilts back his head
content,
drunk on his mother's
warm milk.

4

Your hairless head
looks like monk's.

When you sleep
you spread your arms
like a priest
offering a benediction.

In your face
I see a spark
of what all mystics seek.

5

When I swing him
 in my arms
 he hunches his shoulders,
 hands at his chin,
 and laughs
 like a pot-bellied Buddha.

6

Here there are no names.

Swirling shapes
 with no geometry,
 colors attached
 to no object.
 all things fluid
 like water...

When you look in a mirror
 there is no recognition.

7

Even if he
 were to leave here
 tomorrow
 at least he's had
 this one moment.

His spark is as bright
 as the sun's hueless fire.

A blossom
 is no less brilliant
 if it falls away
 just after blooming.

8

His head can turn
in the palm of my hand.

Mind empty: I've wept
to find such emptiness.

What wouldn't one give
to have it all over again?

9

The first time you looked
out the window you blinked.

Was it the sunlight bathing your eyes
or the heat that rose from the streets?

"That's the world," I said.
You looked again and you blinked.

10

Looking at the moon,
a baby
in my arms.

11

I cannot give you a voice.
When you learn how to talk
tell me everything.
I'll listen without saying a word.

12

Push, push, push
and jump, jump, jump.

It's me, not you,
who wonders
where you will go
when you're older.

13

I see him now
just as he is.

Next year he will walk.
Next year he will talk.

He will never laugh
quite like this again.

14

Under sun,
blue sky,
climb a hill.

Hear the happy
of a baby
on my back.

Chanting dada
in one ear.

15

Our first trip into the mountains
I carried you on my back.

Resting in front of a mountain shrine,
you were still fast asleep.

When you finally woke up,
you looked around at the rain-drenched forest.

The birds chirped at random.
The air was alive.

It was just like the first day of creation,
seeing the earth for the very first time.

16

His very first steps,
a smile,
going no place
in particular.

17

This hug
for the moment so tight—

When will it pass that
grown out of my arms
you walk away
not looking back?