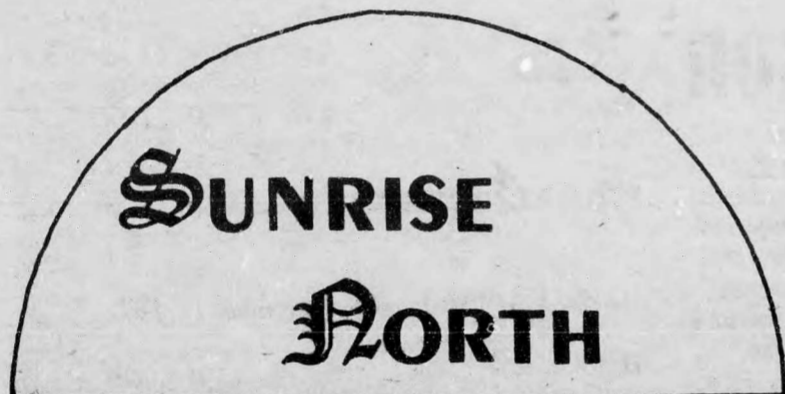


Sunrise north

*Drawing my drapes, I see
pink and purple clouds of dawn
over the white-roofed city,
smoke in rising fountains,
the lights of early risers
twinkling far off,
the new moon, hanging low,
beginning to pale in the morning sky.*

*The beautiful northern city
is a child's Christmas toy
spread out like blocks
with here and there a tree
deftly placed
discreetly frosted;
and, like a child,
I want to pick it up,
move a house here, a tree there,
put more front on that distant dome.*

*The colours fade, the pale blue sky grows higher.
Now I see the sun
gradually rising
over the rim of water-flat plain,
bonfire bright, triumphant.
Soon I shall walk out,
through the white snow, dry as sugar,
into the real street.*



Sunday evening, February

*In my rectangular apartment
interchangeable
in a highrise
in a provincial city
I stand in my kitchen
about to make tea.
My open novel
has fallen to the floor.*

*I might have lived in Bombay,
I think.
I might have lived in London
in a small flat
reading the same novel
a year or so earlier,
taking it to work with me
to read on the tube,*

*Or somewhere in New Brunswick
back woods, married to the farm boy
from next door, now middle aged,
I might have been calculating,
How do we get the kids through high school?*

*It is not too late.
I can still choose
Wellington or Dublin.
I can still go to Athens
in hot weather.*

On El Greco's painting of the agony in the garden

*This Christ is young.
He has Spanish eyes.
A lady might think of him
as her lover
kneeling with ardent devotion,
an upward gaze.
He might be inventing
a sonnet
to an unapproachable virgin
whom he wished to approach.*

*His hands, however, are not lover's hands.
The skeleton beneath is too visible.
His fingers are like branches,
white and graceful.
He is dressed in red
for blood
for martyrdom
and kneels on blue.*

*Behind him the stone is sharp.
Bushes are thin and bare.
A white moon
slides behind gauze.
To one side
the gauzy night
enfolds his sleeping friends.*

*Above him leans the angel
with sharp wings
who holds the golden
heavy cup.*

*The night is long:
Those who betray him draw near.*

Reflection

*The chandelier is reflected
in the window pane,
so that its glass pendants
hang in mid-air
against the early evening sky
forming a new celestial object
unsupported
nearer than the moon
but not to be reached
by any astronaut,*

*or maybe just a flower
yellow centred
with transparent tassels
and no root.*

