
Shadow

Penny Healey, 1995

Where have you been — my shadow self
My pale ghostly companion —
I've been waiting so long
Wondering whatever happened to you.
You were left behind in the rush of birthing.
I turned to look but you were not there
beside me anymore.
For nine months — or thereabouts
We floated together in uterine space
Connected — linked — attached
By the arterial thread of life.
We gazed so often at the us that was ourselves.
We did not speak — we had no need —
We knew —
We knew.
But you did not follow me as we had planned
In our weekly telepathic case conferences.
Why?
Our parents never spoke of you.
It was so strange.
They never spoke of you.
It was as if they didn't know about you.
How could they not have known?
By the time I was able to speak of these matters —
Your memory was so distant
That I forgot to find the words.
The first communications were ignored
Or put down to 'wind' or 'teething troubles'.
I could not tell them that you had been left behind —
And that in order to be myself alone
I needed you to be with me.
Yesterday — I remembered for the first time
In all the time —
And felt inside a tug — a pull so strong on our single heartbeat —
That I wept.