

THE SHIELD OF ACHILLES

THERE are two cities on earth
Divided by time and kindness
And at the centre of their field
Is a king who sits in silence

About him move the reapers
Drawing in the living grain
Goodness or the void deceit
That human life advances

On the edges of this world
Just beyond the known blue rim
Are mortal doubt and anxiety
Glittering with so much disbelief

In one city there is despair
Meaningless desolation
Where sickles of severe abuse
Cut and harvest emptiness

Sometimes moral predators
Destroy us in the night
When ambushed by cruelty
We are wrecked by extreme contempt

In another city there is judgement
Where a palpable soul is weighed
And the words our tongues exchange
Are assessed for generosity

Beyond the urban walls there is
A worn green altar on a plain
Where smoke is offered to the sky
And blood poured on the stones

There are the unwritten stars
Calculating every hour
Few who walk this level world
Observe their silence and precision

There are brides grooms and lovers
Where the youthful go apart
To meet indelibly and completely
Offering all they might possess

There are songs of the universe
That recall for us a truth
Words forsaken in our effort
When we only pursue ourselves

There are small lakes and rivers
Running down toward a coast
And on the hills are quick hawks
Who play upon a thin grey wind

There are vineyards and groves
And orchards where boys and girls
Laugh among the grassy shadow
Lightly clothed with future promise

Just like a dancing floor all this
Was prepared without a single wound
Perfectly beautiful and still
Where years are made immobile

Although we see the movement
Are impelled by human currency
Yet nothing happens or can change
In the eyes of this ardent king

FOR GREGORY NAGY
TWO THOUSAND & TWENTY

