SPRING AFTER WAR

Winter and spring the clouds drift in,
and mist is grey as moving sheep
where ewe goes heavy in lamb, and ewe
beside her lamb lies half-asleep,
her narrow sides with milk drawn thin.

How reconcile the alien eyes,
the warring life how reconcile?
On the lean slope and dripping hill
the sheep move slowly, single-file.
Where is it the heart's country lies?

The rope-vines hang where the clouds move.
The scorpion dances in the brain.
The years of death rattle their bones.
The ewe cries in the pitiless rain
the mortal cry of anguished love.

Which is the country, which is true?
How reconcile the treacherous earth,
the gaping flesh how reconcile—
and still move forward to some birth,
as the lamb moves within the ewe?

Within the bones the scorpion lay.
Within the bones the lamb was made.
Within the bones the heart is housed.
The blood that leaps behind the blade
is death or life; is night or day.