

## The Voices

*for Dale Warland and the singers,  
their farewell concert, May 2004*

I don't know if we have ever deserved  
the voices, but they are ours,  
I don't know if we ever have known  
what it means to be able to speak  
in those tongues, and only  
in my worst, most useless moments  
have I tried to imagine  
our lives without them.  
Where might we go in the world  
where they would not reach us?

I would never go into the dark  
without the voices,  
I have come to rely on how they mend us  
among the ruins  
of what we have hoped for.  
If there were only one branch in the world,  
the voices would find it.

Doubt was never the root of us,  
doubt winds itself, again and again,  
around our doing,  
but it was never the source,  
joy is the source,  
foliage of joy in which  
the singers are hidden, but heard;  
always the gate, always the garden,  
always the light, the shadows,  
always the leaves.

From where I stand now,  
I cannot see every singer,  
but looking out across the years,  
listening in ways learned  
only from them,  
I can hear all the song.