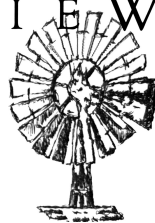


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The Widow Burden, Caught in a Quandry

by Robert Cooperman

I pray for a path
through this labyrinth:
whether to tell William
that my heart sings
whenever I close my eyes
and see his face,
speak his name;
or to board the Denver stage,
take the eastbound,
and live on the pouch of gold
Mr. Sprockett gave me:
resigned to my heart
drying up like leaves
in an autumn wind.

The former soars my veins
with terror and delight;
the latter, dull reason:
what life can I expect
with a half-wild man
who haunts the forests,
hates his white side
even more than he does
the Indian, suffering
abuse from both camps.

Last night, while I cried
over Thomas' cruelty
in life and death,
William appeared,
lay beside me, whispered,
"Live wild with me."

"I must think," I moaned,
not sure if he were man
or phantom,
my cold arms not caring.

To be continued in future issues

These poems are part of a collection entitled *The Widow's Burden*.

Purchase information may be obtained from Western Reflections Publishing Co., P.O. Box 1647, Montrose, CO 81402-1647.

