

ROBERT BLY

The Old Fishing Lines

Sometimes I get in my car on a late October day
And drive north. Everything that I haven't done—
Raking, visiting—all those reasons for not living—
Fall away. I pass half-abandoned summer towns,
Admiring the shadows thrown by bare trees
On bare lakes where cold waves lap the sand.

The renegade minister—the one they all gossip
About—would see those waves too, after throwing
His Sunday hat out the window. He'll be
All right. Death hugs the underside of oak leaves.
In each cove you pass you will see
What you had to say no to once.

It's all right if you walk down to the shore.
You'll feel time passing, the way the summer has.
You'll see the little holes that raindrops leave in fine sand,
And those old fishing lines driven up on the rocks.

ROBERT BLY's two most recent books are *The Night Abraham Called to the Stars* and *My Sentence Was a Thousand Years of Joy*. Both books are made up of ghazals (a compact poetic form well-known in Islamic culture, originating in tenth-century Persia). He has been translating Hafez in recent years with the help of Leonard Lewisohn. The most recent issue of his magazine is called *The Thousands #1*.