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# The Campaign for Peace in Our Time

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THE CAMPAIGN FOR  
PEACE IN OUR TIME

Once in an adolescent sweat  
we planned all night to be righteous;  
to be never without poverty  
and always unreasonably gentle  
(how could they forgive us?)  
like fathers, to our wives.

The campaign for peace in our time  
distracts, like the coffee talk of saints.  
Compassion is a kind of whip  
I don't use well—but if I were ardent,  
walking into the fields  
or over the snow with a step less social,  
then I could walk forever . . .

The saint flagellates himself; it seems  
to be another man. Not pain,  
but the aesthetic of pain is learned.  
He knows there is no reward for being hurt.  
Slowly he strips his skin.

What a beautiful mistake!  
You, or I, the poor men—we who are  
neither gentle nor killers in a good cause—  
did we find that vacant, flayed skin  
and mistake it for a coat?  
We are terrified, we are pleased  
to wear it, into the streets  
and at last to our journals and beds.

From that coat of pain  
a certain voice which is half ours  
speaks openly, and entertains our lives.  
But the campaign for living with ourselves—  
which was a saint who became free  
is moving swiftly now into the fields,  
gliding over the snow—  
a heart of great lightness, grown  
altogether practical and strange.