

1977

## S. Eliason 66: Double Portrait of Emily Dickinson and the Rev. Charles Wadsworth

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to roll  
in the wet ashes of the father,  
wet with the death of the father,  
and not try  
to burn my way upward; the son, rising.

I swear to you now, I will survive,  
rise up, and chant my way through these losses;

and you, you, brother, whatever that is,  
same blood, you who swim  
in the same waters,  
you promise me to make *your* music too,  
whatever the hurt;

O when we are almost only  
mouth, when we are almost only a head  
stuck on the pole of the body,  
and the man says "Talk to me, baby,"  
let's refuse him, brother, both, all of us,  
and striking the spine like an instrument, inside,  
like birds, with even the body broken,  
our feathers fiery—there! there!—among  
the leaves and branches, make  
no sounds he will know;  
like birds, my brother, birds of the new world, *sing*.

### S. Eliason 66: Double Portrait of Emily Dickinson and the Rev. Charles Wadsworth / Jane Cooper

She is just leaving the room.  
He fades to a china cup.

Velocity fraught with gold,  
with *menace of Light*, atomic secrets—  
An aroused skin opens over the Great Plains,  
October leaves rain down.

Corn in conflagration!  
The great retreats of the Civil War!  
Marriage in conflagration!

Years—An empty canvas.  
She scrawls across radiant space

E . . . I . . . SON! I made this, the date,  
name within name.

## The Day the Air Was on Fire / Reg Saner

All afternoon neither of us said  
“This air’s on fire,” though both felt it  
and felt in sunlight like that, death  
was impossible, or if possible, overrated,  
even trivial. The sky kept showing off  
in all colors, each of them blue  
and we trekked that enormous plateau  
whose tundra darkened or flared in one broad  
autumnal crackle of burnt orange, then gold,  
drifting under islands of cumulus  
as if somebody’d laid out the pelt  
from a sunset. Towards the nearest of two  
schist cairns studding the highest stretches  
we knelt and touched late gentian corollas,  
still half bud. “How long till first snow?”  
Days, not weeks. But with outcrops insisting  
the last word should be stone, then flaking  
and falling away from that, we noticed  
how each tuft put them to use  
improvising soil from palmfuls of grit,  
saying “If not this season, the next—  
perhaps the one after,” and coming on  
very small, coming on uphill,  
against everything.