

## Verse

### Pen and Ink Sketches

I think of Ian when I see these books  
Laid out like a rich bazaar on red felt cloth:  
How he would have liked to see them and examine  
Their antique engravings of Niagara Falls,  
Exquisite, nostalgic and apocalyptic.

I remember the day we came down together to Niagara  
In the Volkswagen and he talked about becoming a priest;  
At Goat Island after supper, when he prayed, the stars rose  
And a gull circled the mist. The night exploded into history:  
Some months later I learned that he was dead.

Ian, didn't he kneel to Jesus as an angel does?  
Weren't those his prayers illuminating the water at night?  
Flame, isn't that another name for the rustling of his hair?  
And wasn't it always God calling to him anyway?

What I would have you say to me is that Ian meant to say goodbye  
Just before his long journey into innocence.

It is winter again, Niagara, and only on these pages,  
In a musty book in a glass-covered case inside this library,  
Does what is past survive, perfected and still.  
Terrapin Tower, Clifton House and Fulton's International:  
All of these are gone now, and the tears well up inside me  
As two dark figures scale the ice mountain.

– *Kay Burkman*