

BILL HOWELL

## Portrait of a Friend

The forgiveness of a shared ideal  
on its way to becoming the people  
we keep modelling ourselves after  
without complete permission.

Jazz in the background: the garden  
almost overgrown, ostensibly delicate  
perennials blasting out of themselves  
like rebellious wildflowers ....

And if art is the lie necessary to tell  
the eye's truth, what are we to do  
with the need to please, the need  
to be needed, chosen and shaped?

The mind focuses its own forehead;  
the gut girths the hardest of laughs;  
the groin joins in on mirth's birth;  
the heart knows the joke's on you.

Then your knowledge: some of us try  
to avoid what we don't want to see  
at the same time people who need us  
try to protect us from their lives.

Always, when the bad news comes,  
the lies grow out of our closest fears;  
our spirits grow older if not up, line  
more as their faces become less clear.

All this before we've even picked up  
fate's brush by the scruff of its neck,  
begun inventing who we really are  
and surely: how we come to love.