

SHARDS

I:

trauma is a thief
of words, of breath
war rages within and without
hearts shatter simultaneously
shards intermingled

balcony, trigger
a quartet now half-orphaned
four children rendered fatherless
wife widowed
layers of loss

words make sense for
a moment, a letter —
then dissolve suddenly
alliterative, then alien
no rhyme nor rhythm

can poetry reside
in pain so profound
where is order
in the midst of such
fracture

II:

I write to heal, I write to know
to learn, to speak, to mourn, to sow
I write my losses and my gains
to mold a shape around my pain

I write my fears, and failures too
I write what's left of me and you
I write the wrongs I cannot speak
to remedy my soul's fatigue
and setting free this heart once caged
I write so I must turn the page
to force my hand, though trembling
to fight the fear, to face the sting
of shards that slice my fingers raw
I write so that I might recall
and piece by piece, imperfectly
assemble some reality
make peace with pain

be quenched by rain
new life will bloom
and hope resume

III:

flanked by four, Coretta speaks
(her husband's words, penned from a cell
now through the walls his spirit seeps
an aching loss they know too well):
"unearned suffering is redemptive"
perhaps measures preemptive
deny the chance to rise above
collecting shards, electing love