

Poetry

A Ritual to Read to Each Other

If you don't know the kind of person I am
and I don't know the kind of person you are
a pattern that others made may prevail in the world
and following the wrong god home we may miss our star.

For there is many a small betrayal in the mind,
a shrug that lets the fragile sequence break
sending with shouts the horrible errors around us
storming out to wreck through the broken dyke.

And as elephants parade holding each elephant's tail,
but if one wanders the circus won't find the park,
I call it cruel and maybe the root of all cruelty
to know what occurs but not recognize the fact.

And so I appeal to a voice, to something shadowy,
a remote important region in all who talk:
though we could fool each other, we should consider—
lest the parade of our mutual life get lost in the dark.

For it is important that awake people be awake,
or a breaking line may discourage them back to sleep;
the signals we give—yes or no, or maybe—
should be clear: the darkness around us is deep.

William Stafford

(The unpublished reading version
<http://williamstaffordarchives.org/images/large/M7.28.jpg>)

The Way It Is

There's a thread you follow. It goes among
things that change. But it doesn't change.

People wonder about what you are pursuing.
You have to explain about the thread.
But it is hard for others to see.
While you hold it you can't get lost.
Tragedies happen; people get hurt
or die; and you suffer and get old.
Nothing you do can stop time's unfolding.
You don't ever let go of the thread.

William Stafford

Cómo son las cosas
Hay un hilo que sigues. Va entre
cosas que cambian. Pero no cambia.
Las personas se preguntan sobre lo que persigues.
Tienes que explicar sobre el hilo.
Pero es difícil para otros ver.
Mientras lo aprietas no puedes perderte.
Tragedias suceden; las personas se lastiman
o se mueren; y tú sufres y envejeces.
Nada que haces puede impedir el pasar del tiempo.
Nunca sueltas el hilo.

William Stafford

Traducido del inglés por Joel Nightingale Berning

The Way It Is: New and Selected Poems [Minnesota: Graywolf Press, 1998], p. 42

