

Robert Bly

MOSES' CRADLE

The Pharaoh's wives touch the mud with their toes.
You and I float in Moses' cradle. Dear friends, you and I
Are parted by a thin skin from the ignorance of the Nile.

Ghosts compose themselves from ground mist.
Friends, our souls are moist. "Dry souls are best,"
Plotinus said, but he was nursing at eleven.

Some children hear the dead speak words in walls.
Men piece out secrets hidden in prime numbers.
Women report what Eternity has told them to say.

Our cradle, like Moses', is porous to the Nile.
You and I will never have one whole day of light.
At three o'clock, a wall will creak, or a hare will die.

Beauty has reached us drenched in birth blood.
As our eyes open, bright blood splashes on the floor.
The baby's descent gives us a taste for war.

Some souls remember well, climb so high
They are remembered forever. But Macbeth fell
A thousand miles when the feathers touched his face.