Oh hearts rained down

like stones onto the pavement
and from so high they broke
many long before they fell
others in pieces beside me
my loved friends
the ones who sold up and separated
went to an old dream or new vision
or simply for a change
the ones who set out as if
Vikings or coracles with an ancient monk
and illuminated papers
could still reach America
the ones who still believed
a high pole or tower or a cave
in treeless nature would do

The builder who imagined every trade
he mastered would make him free
the climber who guided others
up the fellsides when Walden Pond
was his real home
the editor who knew good books
were made through love of work
and love of what you worked on
and like Rilke at Muzot took off
found nowhere worthy for her grounding
nowhere to come down

and so many others
wedded to the needle eye of making
and that carpenter of flowers
carver of Virgins sculptor of great fishes
long leapt from their deep blue lakes
in the mountains swimming above it all
my friends my heart's companions
those who wouldn't give a damn
for all this heart work
beating their own way through
to the blocked door the sheer drop
grill on the exit where I would wait
and hope one of them perhaps
would show me the way through
and know as they did
you make this passage on your own.

Desmond Graham is Professor Emeritus of Poetry at the University of Newcastle
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