On the Existence of the Soul

By

How confident I am it is there. Don’t I bring it, 
As if it were enclosed in a fine leather case, 
To particular places solely for its own sake? 
Haven’t I set it down before the variegated canyon 
And the undeviating bald salt dome? 
Don’t I feed it on ivory calcium and ruffled 
Shell bellies, shore boulders, on the sight 
Of the petrel motionless over the sea, its splayed 
Feet hanging? Don’t I make sure it apprehends 
The invisibly fine spray more than once?

I have seen that it takes in every detail 
I can manage concerning the garden wall and its borders. 
I have listed for it the comings and goings 
Of one hundred species of insects explicitly described. 
I have named the chartreuse stripe 
And the fimbriated antenna, the bulbed thorax 
And the multiple eye. I have sketched 
The brilliant wings of the trumpet vine and invented 
New vocabularies describing the interchanges between rocks 
And their crevices, between the holly lip 
And its concept of itself.

And if not for its sake, why would I go 
Out into the night alone and stare deliberately 
Straight up into 15 billion years ago and more?

I have cherished it. I have named it. 
By my own solicitations 
I have proof of its presence.


Source: Firekeeper: New and Selected Poems (Milkweed Editions, 1994)