

Theodore Roethke, The Collected Poems of Theodore Roethke (New York:  
Anchor Books, 1975)

ELEGY FOR JANE  
*My Student, Thrown by a Horse*

I remember the neckcurls, limp and damp as tendrils;  
And her quick look, a sidelong pickerel smile;  
And how, once startled into talk, the light syllables leaped for her,  
And she balanced in the delight of her thought,  
A wren, happy, tail into the wind,  
Her song trembling the twigs and small branches.  
The shade sang with her;  
The leaves, their whispers turned to kissing;  
And the mold sang in the bleached valleys under the rose.

Oh, when she was sad, she cast herself down into such a pure depth,  
Even a father could not find her:  
Scraping her cheek against straw;  
Stirring the clearest water.

My sparrow, you are not here,  
Waiting like a fern, making a spiny shadow.  
The sides of wet stones cannot console me,  
Nor the moss, wound with the last light.

If only I could nudge you from this sleep,  
My maimed darling, my skittery pigeon.  
Over this damp grave I speak the words of my love:  
I, with no rights in this matter,  
Neither father nor lover.