

From a Sermon on the Five Afflictions

Soul, the wanderer, fetch it out
And make it sing in holiness
And hop in God's hand all the day
And preen itself in loveliness.
Five afflictions are the way.

Because the soul is living wick
And flames in its vitality,
Deny yourself both food and drink,
Imitate mortality.
Soul will shake itself and flee.

Because the soul is unity,
Within the coupling dark lie still.
Let body in its agony
Cry to have itself fulfilled.

Soul will know itself unwilled.

The soul is spirit, and spirit shines
As pennies do in a cupped hand.
But the hand, if washed, can shine so too
Keep precious water from your skin
And spirit will not stay within.

The soul is an unchanging thing.
It cannot weight itself with grit.
But body, when anointed,
Puts on a like purity.
Slime yourself, and soul will flee.

Soul, like wind, is lifted up,
Like waves, and like the sea spray.

Let a man go barefoot, and he must
In his heaviness draw dust.
And soul, unhoused, is on its way.

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Harvey Shapiro

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