

DOROTHY GREEN

THE SINGLE MIND (For Charles Benneworth)

A simple man, they said. Perhaps. Who can tell?
If black for him was black, white was white, well,
Maybe he brushed past our grey
Straight to the centre, doing less harm on the way.

At least he was never indifferent: sparks flew
From his passionate thought, like those from his saw and his lathe.
Against weakness, age and the times, he could trust tools he knew;
Made his workshop a fortress, firmer than faith.

They found him there, late on an evening in Spring,
In the place where he re-shaped with joy
The uncertain remnants of life; wrought works of the spirit that ring
True in a table, a bench, a child's toy.

He lay not far from his plants, new seedlings set in a row,
His last gift to his wife, with the veiled words that grow
From the rich earth of marriage: 'I think I will go
And give those tomatoes encouragement . . .' — though
Whether he knew
The old name for the fruit, who can tell?
The words make sense of the life, the life of the words. Who
Would want more? Give thanks, he lived well.