

Softer

Translated by Jo-Anne Elder

Softer on the skin and the heart
than several of the human words
that condemn us to be inferior to ourselves
scrape out the insides of hope with a thousand blows
shred the future into rags of torn memory

Softer
much softer
than words
a ray snuck between the bars
a fragrance snatched away from rotten misery

Softer
than the folly of spring air
a stroke of sunlight
shyly peeking through the barricaded peephole
and a soap-bubble
touching the blue and mauve-veined hands
purified a thousand times by conscience
by imprisoned resisters
that won't wash their hands
of the cares of the world
but rather plunge their ideals
into the blood of betrayed trust
their tenderness lapsed or sadly impoverished
"How can we clean off all this hate from the human race?"

Softer
than the proclamations against war
the gaze of a soldier
lowering his arms
to kneel down before an enemy child
both of them
crying tears of fear and pity
in the face of inhuman cruelty