VARIATIONS TO THE
ACCOMPANIMENT OF A CLOUD

W. S. MERWIN

Because I do not hope ever again
to pass this way I sing these
notes now in silence
each in its own time
one morning near the end of spring
among the invisible unheard stars I sing
this one time with the hope that is here
in every breath
may these notes be heard another morning
in another life
in another spring together

Because I do not hope ever to pass
this way again
one morning late in spring
in the cold rain above the valley I sing
in the old house I came to in my youth
on the ridge looking over the river
a house that had been left to its own silence
for half a century
home for bats and swallows and patches
of sunlight wandering across the floors
under holes in the roof on the day
I first saw it
and recognized it without knowing it
above the same river
Because I do not hope to see again
this spring morning with its cloud of light
that wakes the blackbird in the trees downhill
from the house I came to long ago
when I was young and the silence
was a summer day
that first summer that I would see
from these windows
I came to see
the plum trees flowering on the slope below
the snow swirling outside the kitchen
I will not see this morning fill
with light again along the green field
under the walnut trees those silent ancients
I reach out to it with words
it never hears

Because I do not hope ever to find
my way again to the moments of pure
single fortune and the unrepeated mistakes
that led me here
I look back in wonder
at how I found you and we came to be here
where has it gone
never was there one step backward

Although I do not hope to know again
what I have known since the beginning
not for a moment has it left me
I keep looking for what has always been mine
searching for it even as I
think of leaving it
my love was always
woven with leaving
moment by moment leaving
the one time