Reincarnation

Where the lost river runs beneath the stone,
Where the cold eye of noon blazes unmoving,
and the birds lie fallen in the grasses grieving,
the mice bewildered turn and know they are alone,

I touched a lacerated tree; I cried
out of my heart the will to make it whole;
and shimmering light from my fingertips
made the wood clean and full.

The tree's depth said: "I shielded you in France
a thousand years ago when the archer's shafts
killed all your warrior comrades. For that defense
you heal me now with love and psychic gift."

At his words, my flesh budded with wild joy.
I knelt in grass and warmed the fallen birds
with hungering hands, and like uplifted swords
straight up they flew, their songs exalted rays.

The lonely mice sparkled with laughing speech,
circled my arms and neck, tingled my cheek;
and words for which my inmost soul has searched
for infinite lifetimes beat all my veins awake.

George Abbe