

Adrienne Rich, Time's Power (New
York: Norton, 1989)

P IN MEMORIAM: D.K.

A man walking on the street
feels unwell has felt unwell
all week, a little Yet the flowers crammed
in pots on the corner: furled anemones:
he knows they open
burgundy, violet, pink, amarillo
all the way to their velvet cores
The flowers hanging over the fence: fuchsias:
each tongued, staring, all of a fire:
the flowers He who has
been happy oftener than sad
carelessly happy well oftener than sick
one of the lucky is thinking about death
and its music about poetry
its translations of his life

And what good will it do you
to go home and put on the Mozart Requiem?
Read Keats? How will culture cure you?

Poor, unhappy

unwell culture what can it sing or say
six weeks from now, to you?

Give me your living hand If I could take the hour
death moved into you undeclared, unnamed
—even if sweet, if I could take that hour

between my forceps tear at it like a monster
wrench it out of your flesh dissolve its shape in quicklime
and make you well again

no, not again

but still. . . .

1986