

## Self Portrait

Every day of my life  
    somewhere  
a lover selects a flower to pluck  
    from her meadow;  
a prisoner dreams of what lies  
    beyond the dungeon;  
a child takes first steps;  
raindrops re-sculpt a mountain peak;  
music is performed that none  
    has ever heard before;  
somebody, once again, admires  
    a Van Gogh self-portrait.

Our calendar says it's September thirteenth,  
two thousand seven, and my days therefore  
number twenty two thousand two hundred  
eighty. If the mental math is a bit much,  
I can reveal that this number divided  
by three hundred sixty five gives the result  
    of sixty one,  
with a remainder of fifteen (a tally for every  
    fourth February).

Today is the twenty two thousand two hundred  
eightieth day on which I will not paint  
    my self-portrait.  
Yet, stumbling like a child's first steps,  
I compose another poem, think of the times  
when music, or flowers, reminded me that life  
is more than what we can see from the inside  
    of our prison cells.

Yes, I know that every mountain  
wears down in the wind and rain.  
You have no need to remind me.  
I respond that even hills that are older,  
more rounded than I still  
stand awe-filled, silhouetted  
    against the sunrise,  
offer us the wisdom of everything  
    they have understood.

I cannot mourn.

And when that time arrives,  
I ask that you remember,  
    in my honor  
(perhaps on some future thirteenth  
    of September):  
The only human beings who never die  
are those who were never born.

Steve Bloom  
September 13, 2007