3. Helpern Leivick

No. 6. "Forever"

The world takes me around with arms long and prickly,
and throws me in pyres that burn all the day.
I burn and I burn but the fires don't consume me-
I pick myself up, stride again on my way.

In fact'ries that I stride through, I fall 'neath the giant wheels.
With courage, I blow up the steam pipes today.
I lay myself down as a brand new foundation-s-
I pick myself up, stride again on my way.

Just see: now I'm a horse, in harness of leather;
my raging young rider is whipping away.
. I slice through the ground like a sharp-bladed farm plow-
I pick myself up, stride again on my way.

I sow all of my poems-I sow them like grain seeds;
they sprout and they grow just like grain stalks today.
But I still lie here like a twisted old bramble--
I pick myself up, stride again on my way.

I live here in a dungeon, blow open the cell-door;
above me the freed men are joyful today.
They leave me here bleeding, alone in the doorway--
I pick myself up, stride again on my way.

My clothes bloodily soaked, and dragging my weary limbs,. with purified love I am coming this day.
I come to a house and collapse on the doorstep-s-
I pick myself up, stride again on my way.

(Translation by Barnett Zumoff.)

No. 7. -

No. 8. "How did he get here? (from the cycle "Spinoza", No. 2).

How did he get into this sickroom, the philosopher from Amsterdam?
I look at him - there's no uncertainty.
It's he, it's he.
The full lips. The long nose.
The whole head as though under glass.
His sick chest heaves, straining,
racked, racked by fits of coughing.
Three hundred years - as though one minute.
A drop of blood dots his lip.
Three hundred years of moonlight fall
on his head and pillow. Fall.
Holy one, I touch your sleeve.
Wake up. Rise up. Recognize me.

(Translation by Ruth Whitman.)

No. 9.

No. 10. "Two times two is four." (from the cycle "Spinoza", No. 11).

My body's passion-hide
is stripped away. My pure
soul, what does she do?
She counts, she counts.
Two times two is - four,
I times I is - you,
you times you is - me,
death times death is - rest.
My head is in the east,
my feet are in the west;
drive quicker, don't get lost -
near times near is - far.
Tap the door. - Knock, knock. -
It's open, come right in, -
kindle the last look, -
death times death is - being.

(Translation by Ruth Whitman.)