

Therefore is one of Joelle Wallach's **Spiritual Speculations**, a number of short works for chamber choir or vocal quartet which probe the puzzle of living with conscience in a flawed world. **Therefore**'s words encourage engagement in the only world we have, but its interwoven, wordless sighs lament a lost if illusory ideal. As **Therefore** ends, those sighs subsume the words; the voices veer toward and away from one another, yearning for yet mourning a profoundly imperfect world, and meanwhile creating their own accord.

Therefore

Nothing exists that is not marred, therefore
we are obliged to imagine how things might be:
the sea
at its green uttermost, the shore
white to exaggeration, white before
it was checked and clouded by its spent debris.

Nothing exists that does not end, and so
to knowledge we must deliberately be untrue:
you
murmuring that you will not go, when you will go,
promising to do always what you cannot do:
hold the sun steady and the sky new.

No one exists who can be loved the same
by day as by dark; it is that sleeping place,
lame,
we attempt to follow into, and cannot trace,
that makes us lie, saying we know his face,
as if we knew even half of his true name.

William Dickey