Double Sonnet I

by John Riley

“Man's anxiety results from the human paradox that a man is an animal who is conscious of his animal limitation.” Ernest Becker

We love our other animals, they know,
but the former beasts don't realize
we love them best because they live
unconcerned about their ignorance.
We humans can never forget,
even with God, heroin, wine in a box,
that regret comes from ignoring the end.
It's the ultimate wisdom the Buddha said,
Christ reminded us the hour is coming,
one offers acceptance, the other escape.
I watched my dog die. Fighting a seizure
his black eyes caught mine. I saw pain
but recognized no despair, no where
am I going and what will I be there.

Do you think the soul is simple-minded
or is it the rage that fled to death
into the heartbeats of No Man's Land?
Am I the only one who wishes daily
I was strong enough to choke a river's bend
or could slip the stanchion, carry a lantern
down a dusty road and through the town
where angels still spit snuff into cans?
What dreams we silly humans have
behind our mouths and skins and avarice
while our bodies crumble inside minutes
and a dog's death is endless and capacious.

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