

# 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.

