

THE ANSWERING
A Sequel to Browning's "Evelyn Hope"

Because no one has ever spoken
Back from here, we've all supposed
This coldest seal remains unbroken,
This ancient passage always closed.
If only you who think I died
Could know this is a sweet exchange,
Could know how boundaries fade inside
The spectrum's unimagined range!

You never would have come to me
Had I remained a normal length
In mortal phase. I'm sure you see
The structured weave, its narrow strength
Would never grant to us a place
In that frame's weft: A giddy girl,
A proper gentleman of grace
In middle years allowed to purl

Into the fabric of acceptance.
Not while I lived, but only after,
Could you speak love without the chance
Of shock, rebuke, or even laughter.
Like you, I never dared express
My secret. Silly child, you might
Have thought. But by this leaf you press
Into my hand, we will unite.

Don't grieve, my dear, your words are not
Earthbound. I hear your lover's heart
With mine and don't despair our lot.
Now new dimensions frame my part
As they will yours at your last breath.
The cycling portals pivot, spin
On far-off stars that hinge on death—
An old wronged term that means begin.

And by your token, I transmit
My pledge through veins of green leaf stillness:
We'll meet renewed, a better fit
With place, my hand then free of chillness.
It's fitting that my name was Hope.
Please don't deny its muffled call
Or waver in transition's scope.
Here, time is nothing; love is all.

—Glenna Holloway