

The Rose

She was just a kid ... well, 23 or 24 ... but to me, a 70-year-old ...

In her 24 years, she had seen more hardship, felt more pain ...
abandonment, poverty, loneliness, shame ...
than I had even imagined by the time I was the same.

Hunger, both physical and spiritual, stalked her at times ...
but at least no more abuse or neglect, these so-domestic of crimes ...
and therein a blessing ... at least alone, she'd bear no more pain
at least inflicted by others ...

And yet ...
And yet ...

where did she get the vision to see that hope was the only way for her to be?

She wore a smile as genuine and true as any smile I'd ever seen
Her optimism, every bit as pure.
She looked you in the eye, seemingly never shy,
asked how you were,
if you'd had a bite,
if you didn't think this essay or that score
wasn't, in its context, just right ...

and, oh, the beauty in last night's play,
or in the paintings now on display,

and she dreamed dreams,
of who she'd be,
and how she'd turn her misery
into a medicine with which to heal her wounds.