



A PLACE FOR POETRY _____

I WANT TO BE A UKRAINIAN

—MARGARET WHEATLEY

When I come of age,
When I get over being a teen-ager
When I take my life seriously
When I grow up

I want to be a Ukrainian.

When I come of age
I want to stand happily in the cold
for days beyond number,
no longer numb to what I need.

I want to hear my voice
rise loud and clear above
the icy fog, claiming myself.

It was day fifteen of the protest, and a woman standing next to her car was being interviewed. Her car had a rooster sitting on top of it. She said "We've woken up and we're not leaving till this rotten government is out." It is not recorded if the rooster crowed.

When I get over being a teen-ager
when I no longer complain or accuse
when I stop blaming everybody else
when I take responsibility

I will have become a Ukrainian.



The Yushchenko supporters carried bright orange banners which they waved vigorously on slim poles. Soon after the protests began, the government sent in thugs hoping to create violence. They also carried banners, but theirs were hung on heavy clubs that could double as weapons.

When I take my life seriously
when I look directly at what's going on
when I know that the future doesn't change itself
that I must act

I will be a Ukrainian.

"Protest that endures," Wendell Berry said, "is moved by a hope far more modest than that of public success: namely, the hope of preserving qualities in one's own heart and spirit that would be destroyed by acquiescence."

When I grow up and am known as a Ukrainian
I will move easily onto the streets
confident, insistent, happy to preserve the qualities
of my own heart and spirit.

In my maturity, I will be glad to teach you
the cost of acquiescence
the price of silence
the peril of retreat.

"Hope," said Václav Havel, "is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense regardless of how it turns out."

I will teach you all that I have learned
the strength of fearlessness
the peace of conviction
the strange source of hope

and I will die well, having been a Ukrainian.