A soul is something we have every now and then.  
Nobody has one all the time  
or forever.

Day after day,  
year after year,  
can go by without one.

Only sometimes in rapture  
or in the fears of childhood  
it nests a little longer.  
Only sometimes in the wonderment  
that we are old.

It rarely assists us  
during tiresome tasks,  
such as moving furniture,  
carrying suitcases,  
or traveling on foot in shoes too tight.

When we're filling out questionnaires  
or chopping meat  
it's usually given time off.

Out of our thousand conversations  
it participates in one,  
and even that isn't a given,  
for it prefers silence.

When the body starts to ache and ache  
it quietly steals from its post.

It's choosy:  
not happy to see us in crowds,  
sickened by our struggle for any old advantage  
and the drone of business dealings.

It doesn't see joy and sorrow  
as two different feelings.  
It is with us  
only in their union.  
We can count on it  
when we're not sure of anything  
and curious about everything.

Of all material objects  
it likes grandfather clocks  
and mirrors, which work diligently  
even when no one is looking.

It doesn't state where it comes from  
or when it will vanish again,  
but clearly it awaits such questions.

Evidently,  
just as we need it,  
it can also use us  
for something.