

Time

by Sheena Barnes

Time - you only have to say the word
And myriads of images throng the mind.
Rings on a tree trunk, clocks,
Photographs of babes from long ago,
Stone steps worn with countless treading feet,
And lined and calloused hands - the proof of endless toil.

But all these images of time suggest
A concept measured in years and days,
A rendering of time unreal to most of us,
Who do not regulate our lives by engine parts.

How to compare a sun-filled day
Spent lying mindless by a river bank,
With one spent frozen and immobile,
In desperate hope of telephones that never ring,
Or for the unconscious body to wake up and smile
Of hazy recognition of a life renewed.

One flies away -
The more we try to halt the racing hours -
The quicker the sun sets and evening comes.
The other seems set in molten lead,
No pace or sigh will move us on to reach
A favourable conclusion to our anguished state.

So time eludes us, but has us in its power,
We cannot force the endless day to end,
Or stretch our happy hours to suit ourselves.

Our memories, though, show us a means
Of beating times inexorable will.
Called up at random, when whole worlds away,
Imagination halts the march of time
And brings remembrances both sweet and sour
Which we can play whenever we've a mind,
And live in worlds where doubtful future has no part
And anxious present has no power to hurt.