On Visiting Giza

I have stood on the banks of the Nile seeking wisdom, 
stared into the eyes of the Sphinx, 
wandered between the tumbled small pyramids of the three queens, 
and watched the clouds 
change the colors of the pyramids of Cheops, Khafre, and Menkaure.

All they hoped for was the divine sleep 
that closed their eyes and kept their souls alive, 
each gold-framed jewel, each sarcophagus, each mural painting, 
each ritual prayer, a great preparation. The ka-soul now wanders lost 
without its body, those mummified remains carted off to any western museum, 
a wordless song of pain.

All tried to buy insurance -- Cheops with at least four solar boats to ferry 
his ka-soul to the next life, Tut with three sarcophogi to protect 
his mummified remains, the innermost one of solid gold. 
Oh, how the pyramids at Giza cry out for respect, the most solemn 
prayers warning intruders away, 
their size a competition, each pyramid larger than the last, 
their size saying, pick me, pick me. 
The grave robbers came almost before the painted seals were dry, 
almost before the closing funeral prayers were complete, 
and before the queen's tears were dry.

Tourists wander this large complex, 
ready with cameras for the Sphinx, tempted by postcards, 
tablesized pyramids, plastic busts of Nefertiti or Alexander the Great. 
They stand in line to ride the Bedouin camels, gaily decorated 
with green, red and yellow tapestries. 
More tourist buses pull up with a flurry of dust, 
all dwarfed by what we have come to see -- the pyramids.

I sit on a giant block from Khafre's temple, 
the causeway still flat, reaches down to the Sphinx. 
The clouds change overhead. 
Even my tears dry in the wind.