

# The Empty Cradle



The restless image comes to my unquiet

mind:

A child's cradle, the old-fashioned wooden type  
Hand-joined in some grandfather's tool-shed;

Soft eiderdown quilted by a grandmother's circle;  
A cute knitted bonnet with crocheted lace trim  
Made by a long-since spinstered Maiden Aunt.  
I laugh out loud at such dewy-eyed foolishness  
I made my choice long ago not to have children.

And yet.

As the seasons of my life change from Autumn  
Into the inevitable Winter, I feel the coming chill;  
I ask would a child have brought loving warmth?  
Other people and their children – their stories too  
Tell me that despite all the trials and tribulations  
The warmth of having offspring lights a torch  
In the hearts of those fortunate to be so blessed  
That can never be extinguished, no matter what.

Could I have raised a child to be loving and kind?  
I confess that I have always doubted that I could.

The ghosts of past trauma that haunt my present  
Would surely have tripped up my desire to love  
Cherish and nurture – I cannot see how it could not  
The same ghosts that destroyed my relationships  
Have obscured any ambition I might have to parent.

And yet.

The empty cradle that rocks gently back and forth  
In the dark annals of my imagination, so clear that

I can hear the nagging creak of the wooden rocker;  
Asking the questions that I never want answered.

*John Llewellyn James*