

The Poems

And so a little has been accomplished
though not so an autobiography
could tell the difference - a rift diminished
there, and there greater uncertainty.
Books are blooming projected hours.
The pen turns cycles no life has told
nor been told - how little we ask of others
these written questions before they are old.
My sorrow and I are that kind of lovers
again though the winter had crystallized over
all but the moment that gleamed so crucial
it almost seemed time was my new lover.
I'm rambling and tired. Life seems a story
set down so lightly no poem could act
to bring up mysteries from the warmth
that will not yield to time or fact.
What is a novel? I've always avoided
words that devour in setting forth,
prepared to eat my own words, prepared
to distinguish life from what it is worth.
They say we are tending to write longer poems.
I tend to sleep less and write shorter lines,
but am willing to try with the best of them,
though I wouldn't take lengths as the signal signs.
Who was that vague blond Indian young one
who wants her poems to be secondary?
She can choose if she's lucky; my values refuse
to consciousness any such hierarchy.
Let it all go, the comparing and growing.
Write what you can't dream and sleep out the rest.
My only worries the lack of presence
that makes the thought count - that kind of test.

O yes, I know it's better, and all that -
good and sad, that's what it is, good and sad
after years of bad and happy. Ararat
is a mirage, the water's where we gazed
and a thousand seamews veer their bodies down
the air, and in that silent weight we drown.

Here is no sea to play in, and no youth
to bring us home rejoicing, after hours.
The snake we dreamed of has a human tooth,
Achille's heel's no myth. and all our powers
lead to the inlet and the murky pool
where years ago we played at love and fool.

Our blood's a confident saline solution
that says we first arrived out of this sea
experimentally, and resolution
has brought us back to nature admirably.
Yes. and there's something in the mind that says
until we loved we wasted all our days.

Man's no amoeba, though, and must have thought
himself into the thickets and the hills
and built himself a contract, prayed, and sought,
Promethean, a cure for nature's chills.
Are we abetting death by this dark ocean,
Regressing to an algae-like commotion?

My heart and body reach for wisdom's string
that always pulled me out of a bad place.
But thought's become a sea that will not sing
without my mind's consent and body's grace.
Here by this tepid, weatherbeaten shore
love rocks the waves, and we're a semaphore.

telephone numbers

they are as intimate
as tenderness, and hate,
private, personal. limited
as something one might have said,
conveyed in undertones.
so that all soon may murmur at their phones,
and when they are revealed
they intimate the depths that are concealed.
choice morsels
distributed to some sweet few, or all.
when they are told
the voice is carefully neutral, soft and cold.
as Sarah Bernhardt
reciting the alphabet
excited violent passions,
these digits, in their fashions
convey all that is to be known.

and now, what of the telephone
itself? intimate instrument, closer when
one tells secrets than anyone,
so discreet, acceptable, non-interfering,
one trusts it with one's voice and breathless hearing,
"cradled," as they say,
or at one's lips a dozen times a day.
one is alone with it when one confides
what one most longs to hide.
dusting it, one finds it is all
people, squat, rhythmical.

comfortable, enticing,
a human thing,
at home with itself
on table or shelf
and the clasped receiver
will never deceive one.

It snowed yesterday, and the snow
resolved itself into a dew.
Today the sky is bright and low,
a weight of pressing blue.
My soul went out into the wind
and drifted down, and danced on high.
Today's light freezes up my mind
and I must once more cry.
The freedom of the heart and limbs
to take all paths, whatever path,
has vanished. The sun sings and climbs
in ancient love and wrath.
Yesterday I sang: the fall
of snow wept for some, but for me
its benediction over all
set my diffuse life free.
Today I sing because the sun
sings louder than I can uphold
and says, It's all to be the one
of beaten gold.

May, 1975

It's nearly over, and I wouldn't have it
any different, but with ends beginning
something blocks the throat - I wouldn't have it
different, but the heart goes up like tinder
particularly if you've joined the union.
It's a job like any other, I'd say,
though some others hold it wastes more anguish -
anyway, the union was in order,
not to let the inspiration perish
isolated.

So, they brought in leaders,
made us sign a statement we supported
freedom and equality in hiring.
Only trouble is, what's freedom got
to do with suffering? We are all equal
to suffering. That's when the fire started,
fire burning all equal sufferers.
Sure I'd hoped for freedom, but I thought it
something of a state of mind, respected,
government-controlled - not like this yearning
suffering's let loose.

But that's the union.

I'll be back next year. My contract's good
three more winters. Only, where's the end
now we're all suffering together? Bed
with the women, beer among the men.

She was very prolific.

Night after morning
beside the Pacific
a crash without warning
would leave the beach bare.
The fraught edge withdrawing
caught her unaware,
where some snail was pawing
and clams sank, sand-bubbled,
the vanishing ocean
the glitter, fleck-troubled,
the silent commotion
left day half-ended,
night's birth half-stilled
while her wet pen defended
what radiance killed.

Lumps of music like gold stones
roll down chasms wet with fire
all the tackle of life's hire
burns like amber in the bones,
sears away a dream. Bereft
of flesh's impudence and sleep
here at pinnacles of deep
nightblue fire, sing what's left.
Codas blind with finish rare
as blood in heaven rinse our eyes
of all but light, and leopard-wise
our glances narrow: joy, despair.
Joyous and desperate, we narrow
all that's left into one flame
that burns until all is the same,
its echo in our shouting marrow.

The man on the radio says it's just one of those days.
I believe him. The sky is like a dark sack. The trees are still
under the weight of the air. The horizon's combustible,
dull orange under the clouds. I believe what he says.
It's one of those days when you can't die, or love, when words
come instead of tears. There's no difference between night and day
and the morning stretches back to the night before. If you say
it's just one of those days, I believe you. I hear the swords
clash in my heart with a muted sound. I listen
for some fine-edged distinction between right and wrong
but the air is heavy in my heart. The birds' song -
is it weeping, or just some innocent natural glisten?

It's one of those days when dullness terrifies,
and the sound of cars is some impossible dream.
I can remember how it all would seem
if it weren't just one of those days. Emphasize
just. The radio says it will pass. Heavy-eyed,
what is one to go on on a morning when the power
is turned off? Will afternoon bring a clearer hour?
I long for something to judge, or say, or decide.
"It's just one of those days," and we all know what he means.
Wrestling with God for our souls seems a glad illusion
like strength or weakness or blood, or rainy confusion
in the field, and your scatters; flowers, and all those scenes.

My grandfather sits like a twist of lemon
in a cool full glass. His skin
is waxy, and the ear proffered to me
for a kiss is a dry drop, a flake.
His shirt is crisp, clean and white his cheeks.
He sits in a cool removed liquid
irradiate. The white sun burps
as in some foreign country his linen passed through
tens of years ago. He has become his cool drink.

In the courtyard Piaf throws it out,
all that memory of war dead. I leap
across the night to catch the yelled agony
that is like a drink, half moon. half sun,
foreign hearts. emphatic loud despairs.
My grandmother would never think of singing
in their final arboretum, but I imagine
she is singing of accordions, we are singing
of bells and valleys' horizontal light.

The trees are tossed in the wet air of memory,
leaning against the clear white sky.
All at once, as by a weather-god's decree,
bodies and souls ajoin like the pale and dark
heaven that breathes on sense that has grown shy.

When the blue tears out, and we are overcome
with its richness, our whole life is in praising
the sky, and our absorption into some
exterior, our rush out of ourselves
into a white glove holding a paintbrush, raising

our hands with fantastic and courtly bitterness
that we can be, and yet not be, the sun,
the same conflict, only refined, of happiness
that shuts out memory, laying image on image
superimposed, that life may blaze and be one.

But today the body is clear, the air is damp

and our words know themselves, that used to scan
for outer evidence or inner stamp
of credibility or relation. Now we breathe
something the roots, the rain, the shoots of past years plan.

One morning last dream,
last of many variegated prints
of liquid black and fire tints
the patterns on the window screen
shone waking green.

What is this fecundity
my morning window silhouettes?
Light says, brace not to forget
afore astringent galaxies
for softer trees,

"Keep back the grasses,
keep back birds' song
remember all that nightly right and wrong
for terror and truth so sharp as
a hawk's wing pass."

Song, there sang birds once too.
All was not flaming iron poised
to brand the daylight without noise.
without weariness comes no youth.
Morning's colors weave the light with truth.

Sing, then, for the bird's flight
not without effort, though it seems to drift,
for the sun finding a beam to sift
in other rooms, for time's light
catching a moving breeze, a greener night.

Water over the dam - how it boils and rages:
pain of division - the river no longer a river
gay, sparkling, leaping up in dragonflies, the ages
of life told in landmarks, the source, continuous giver
individuates over stones. around turns; joyful stages
awakening to the moon and the sun, the shocking, mellifluous quiver
of life playing, descending to the cold darkness sages
intuit. To find there, like some impartial-eyed diver,
pearls, moonstones, treasures useless as wages.
No reward, no incentive runs the mysterious liver.

And then, to have it all broken, the sheen
cursed and moiled, dragging up mud, not a jewel,
obliterating all that, lovely and lissome, has been.
To adapt, the water charges, "This was always" - a fool
afraid to feel. So the rack takes it all, all it has seen
and garbles the fresh, multitudinous, rippled, cool

surface and depth, saying, You have forgotten the mien
of joy says, Under my skin- joy is wisdom. Dual
river, remember: save yourself, do not break, for clean
over the crisis you will see your face in your own clear and placid pool.

The sun falls into the sea
and the child into his bed.
I must hurry to be alone
under the shadowed tree.
My life that was holding me
halting and slow, is done -
the last dark hours have sped:
I have said goodbye, said she.

Said he, She has gone away.
dried her dim tears and left.
Tonight when I raise the light
and sit before the fire
I shall search and inquire
whether the change is right
that leaves me cold and bereft,
reluctant to face the day.

Said they, We are driven apart
by time, soul's necessity,
by lobbying on what is real
and choosing of quiet dreams,
and we ache - yet something redeems
the wound and lets it heal
under the shadowy tree:
in the fire of the heart.

I have a heart open to all.
Where it came from I don't know
made perhaps of a spring bird's call
and the quiet sound of the tinkling snow.
Friends and lovers are scattered far,
lost in a dream or tense with rage.
I would call forth all that are
part of my heart upon the page.
The wildest, and the ones who come
to mind most now, are those that share
dwelling-place with their feelings alone,
and never know a man's care.
And those whose duty seems to lie
in creating an artifact of their lives-
their drama makes my heart shy
but in the end they, too, forgive.
Then there are the radiant, various
souls who turn from love to hate
whose interests beyond self-knowledge lose
all pettiness in their profane passion for fate.

All these are in my mind, and yet
one escapes speech, whose daily mood
is innocent with the control which begets
truth, and the deepest choice of word.
Those lives has given me many dreams
and the love of the dreams of my soul,
and have made me see beyond what a friend seems
to what a heart is when a heart is whole.

Who wants this other rhythm?
Carelessly I throw it away
to the winds - it plays with them,
wet and sunny, any day.
The music in the background,
the music in my heart
are comforting to have around -
come take this other part,
anyone, which is not love
or tears, and yet remains
the evidence that life's above
what satisfies and pains.

Hauteur eclipsed in the gleam of an eye,
dark and white, warm and proud,
speaks to my heart that desires don't lie:
you are my fear, you are my sight,
and I must return to speak out loud.

The turn of a collar, the turn of a hair
are equal in this strange fertile land
where desire lies fallow and seeded by care
that falls from the cups that the tulip tree wears
and I say that this time I will understand.

The spotted leopards of the moon
move in our talk running raging with fear,
and the fear and the seedtime are over too soon
and the sun pours down, and the sad trees bloom:
love continues, and parting is near.

Happiness glimpsed in the flash of an eye
is over before you nor I can blame
more than a hurt. and the heart knows why:
that mornings and hearts are never the same,
that love speaks out in rhymes and games -
all but the heart breaks; now we know why.

There is no everyday for me
I rise and set by poetry
and if the rhymes are old and bowed
the clearest sky's a thundercloud.

There is no everylove for me
each new face, each he or she
testing like acid on a plate
of time, rubs out or burns a fate.

There is no everypoem for me
each moment's a new anarchy
where thing and thought cannot forget
one must fall from my parapet.

There is an everywhere for me
my page is sand and wood and sea
and love and day - how should I dare
but call this table, Everywhere?

Because You Are Here

Now that the need has passed. now that the need
has changed, how grateful the need is to be
evoked. You are the need and the fulfillment, the seed
and the rain. You are the eye and that I see,
the hunger and the sustenance, but more. You are the cover
of my heart when it is awake, that allows it to
dream aware. Without you, I am laid over
myself, filled into myself, mortared shut. Without you
I have neither terror nor safety, doubt nor certainty, sun
nor shadow. I am neither awake nor asleep. I
neither remember nor forget. Now one
is the answer to all final statements that now turn to questions -
why?

Here the mountains are the clouds
pointing from ephemera
toward where the silver light explodes:
days defy all memory.
A perfect past will shoot out here,
a child, respecting pointed leaves
as things of God that shine out there,
but not too careful where God lives.
What will its mother think at dawn
when rising to the mountains' white,
the dreams of clouds recalled and done,
she turns to where the cradle's lit?
Wind moves the cedars. All is safe
from fancy's ghost and fury's wrench.
Down in the garden, half to half,
the teapots grow a flowered inch.
The sky is bare. The leaves shout up
their cry to blue. The sun is low.
A child's preoccupied first step
rejoices in what others do.
What heartstrings rustled in the swell

when God touched man to his green world?
What great passion flower fell
when all surrendered as it would?

I think you don't remember.
Do you remember the rose window?
Do you remember the roses?
I remember your mother.
Do you remember when you said to me,
How I am bent.
You are bent into my sight.
You are bent into a rose window.
I remember a love and a summer.
You were not there.
Your mother bends over the roses.
She raises her eyes and remembers.
I remember a moon when you told me you loved and missed me.
I remember a moon when you told me of love.
Your mother sent me rosecovered nightgowns.
There was no moon the night I loved.
I remember a child and a mother.
I remember remembering loving.
Do you remember the white beds where we talked of love?
Did you know that that is where there was no moon?
Do you think my love remembers loving me?
Remember for me. I love what you do not remember.
I love you and remember.

Window Decoration

a round slate of green
written on with morning
depends from the sun.
a vegetable zodiac.
or lamprey or electric ocean.
beneath the light. there is some miner
here or locomotive. light
brightening and approaching hard like
the softest vision of hell
one can imagined one's eyes are
not removed, one's tongue does not go
dead before the sight of that speech
fully-grown and flatly wizened as
a dark mushroom pressed in glass so
green the bottom nub is like amber
sealing wax, so round
that under its pressure
words have all objects.

The soft pebbles of words
succeed one another
tumbling like dew from the

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