

A Fine Room

My new room looks far too much like *my* room. It's a fine room, clean, attractive, comfortable, well-outfitted, cared for, efficient, intelligent, stimulating in the images and ideas, peaceful, productive, resourceful, paid for, and available, I cannot make it more than I can make myself.

What's lacking is an *other*, with the same qualities, not in duplication, or redundancy, but in alchemy. Since I've defined myself away from finding a random social match, I've stopped describing my life in common with the common and near to great human mind.

I've passed over a line I didn't draw, a demarcation made by those who are content with discontent, satisfied with dissatisfaction, those who are bored in such a way that it's become a way of life.

Teasing the borders of that life with wit and bright images, I may have been made rich as Rockefeller, but not without a little effort, I am here, teasing the waters where only a few swim.

But what is effort that's a hike into the mountains, a hard winter's survival, and then the vista of vast land and sea, followed by an occasional footprint in the sand, I suppose I look the same.

The Regular Catastrophe

What is confusion, and how does someone in the middle of it, describe it, a hurricane that dislodges a forest, a river turned to something more than flow, the democracy of water, anarchy in the wetter emotions.

Everything is close, here at the epicenter of love's shopping mall. I don't mean hungry, adoring crowds, but a logjam of delicate concerns and passions, the glance of nuance in the eyes, then like a slant-back assaulting the defense, an apple crate passing itself off as a Maserati.

There's nothing original here, just the regular catastrophe.

Bend over and pull up your coat, I hear the drunk in the next stall say, getting ready to clean the porcelain of coke. It's only Thursday night, but it's already been a hell of a week, and she's due any minute.

An American Poem

From where I sit, everything I see is American, American walls,
American paint, American people, a couple of American cops
drinking American coffee. How does a man with a gun appreciate
cheese cake, with keys, a badge, a billy club, and a radio on his belt?

American music, American chairs, American talk, what does it mean
to an American to be an American? A light American rain is falling
on the American street. The lights of the American cars are shining
in the American night. An American is holding an American umbrella,
as she waits for the American light to change to American green.

Does one become American when one is already American?
The American cafe is nearly empty, as the American patrons
head for their American homes to eat their American dinners.
Everything is American. This is an American poem.

The Day the Sparrows Came Back to San Francisco

The shower is dripping, the heater is clicking,
the birds are chirping, what the hell is happening?

There are no birds in San Francisco, she says,
rolling over in bed, in the room on Peters' Alley,
where the chickens walk the street like in Mexico,
and the kids playing football on Sunday are all related.

The gloves tossed on the chair have fallen into gestures,
the floor looks as if it has been raining clothes, and still
the singing continues, a relentless cheerfulness.

The 7AM traffic on Mission Street rumbles relentlessly,
as the sun relentlessly brightens the room by degrees.

The refrigerator hums, the heater clicks, the dogs bark,
the heels click on the sidewalk, as she burrows deeper
into the layered sheets, strewn and twisted like Paul
Bunyan's handkerchief, and the horns honk.

Some stray band of birds has wandered across the border,
migrating the wrong way in the wintertime, as she turns,
twisting and rolling in the sheets, I think of a tune.

Let me go, let me go, lover, I sing, as her back turns, naked
to the room, striking beauty, a scene for Matisse, Courbet,
or me and my eyes, I trace the lines over and over with my eyes,
I dream the dream that happy lovers make of everything in sight,
this day, the day the sparrows came back to San Francisco.

Twine of Life

Everything looks like something else,
but in fact, everything is what it is and not
a metaphor for us to decipher or a simile
to carry us, like a bobsled downhill,
or on to victory.

Downhill skiing is not like flying across fallen bodies
to score a touchdown, this life is a poem writ on water,
unless it be a river of realization that connects between
neurons in response to experience, that old innocence,
twins in the twine of life, in and out of time.

I love you means you are the tree I water
for the greening of the leaves I see you are.

The Lake of Love's Beauty

The most beautiful woman in San Francisco, ask anyone, is hunched over coffee nearby, her red-lined, zippered, motorcycle jacket is thrown over the back of her chair.

She's talking to her severe-faced sister, who, intent, tells a tale and touches Charmian's earring, now grins, a stretched-mouth over hard teeth, I'm signaled by my opposite number, the one who sits across from beauty.

She smiles, her eyes fill with love. She casts it my way, like the fisherman who throws the bait at the trees before it sails into the lake, the calm, or turbulent, shallow, or deep *Lake of Love's Beauty*.

If I were sitting at a window by such a lake, I would look like a portrait of a man sitting the way I am now. Nothing could improve such a miniature, except I might be holding this book, forever about to return to it, caught between truth and beauty, dreaming the links, unaware of their separations.

Flash Rain

The agitation that comes on a man in the presence of a woman blessed with remarkable beauty would never do to win the heart of one of love.

Certainly, it takes part in the stir she is part of, altogether too familiar to her, seldom done without, and if done without, becomes cynical, or blind boredom.

Except where an original mind, by fate's double blow, is thrust onto the same woman, and seeks itself, the way all flowers grow wherever they grow.

There, it becomes challenge of a higher sort, or other, or odd, or never known, or alone. There, it dreams, and along with dreaming, sees, and is.

No imagination of the excitable satisfies. Flash rain never soaked the soil, or the soul.

Sans Aeroplane

Since the 14th Century, and back then they said, *Since all time began*, people have been sitting in Dunkin' Donuts, staring at the table top.

She, on the other hand, has interesting friends, with whom she enjoys the dance, theatre and films, without which she says, she would go mad.

After the movie, in the paint store parking lot, she told me she thought she had fallen in love with someone else, although it might not work out, he lived in another country, *Safe as pie*, I thought, *Safe as houses*.

When I saw her at the performance of the famous poets, we smiled and waved. There was no form there, but there was a lack of content, as all those who are good at neither combine them.

Later, over coffee and doughnuts, I saw the future in those shapes that hover in or above the formica.

I, too, may find my *someone else*, in another country, sans aeroplane, sans effort, sans regret, and not like my sweet, parking lot partner, more than half of both, all rolled up in less than the whole.

Half In and Half Out of Paradise

No woman has ever understood the truth that grows of its own necessity,
who didn't stop it with birthing or submission to a life of belonging.

And every man who has understood it, either made gods to worship,
or divined himself, or turned to drugs or booze, or, if lucky as rain
at the right time, these two found themselves, or found each other.

A man and a woman, understanding of their own truth,
are like the original dream and its painful challenge,
half in and half out of paradise, they give birth to all others,
they find all others in themselves, they bloom in the garden sun.

Poetry is Thought and Art in One

(Mathew Arnold)

Inventor of crisis, to match the crisis unseen, he senses, fears, provokes,
regrets, stays immersed, learns some oddment, dislodges the needle,
the sliver, the stinger, tiny beginner of pain, then nurses the mess
back to clean skin and scar.

The surgeon who cuts to cure is not loved in the mirror or the memory,
his uniform is, perhaps, held in fearful regard, but the greater body of us,
profits, as the inventor invents what's always been true, at such a cost.

Bleeding Ceilings

Too much activity makes inactivity awkward, it turns attention to the two kissing, like kids play adult, like adults play lovers, like odd birds walk through the other bunches of birds, oblivious to the difference.

Having a conversational chatter bordering on incomprehensibility, young lovers cooing in each other's faces, Narcissus polishing his mirror so he won't miss a wink.

The ceilings bled all day long, nothing could stop it, no medicine, no bandage, no hope, no way to stop the bleeding, they bled, until it was time for the doctors to go home and shut out the light.

I practiced felicitous rebellion all day, the forerunner of habit, it's had its dinner and a place to sleep. An idea is aborning, like a bird who's fallen from the nest, bounces a couple of times, before its wings flesh the air.

Saint Stephen shakes the stones from his hair, before, heaven bound, he looks around, thinks of eagles taking to the air, and why not try it, does.

This is Self Transformation

You take yourself on, like a boxer takes on an actor
to shape him to the part, like a drill sergeant takes a
raw recruit away from his mother, to teach the new way,
or at least not the old way, instead of merely or belligerently
staying alive, like weightlifting in prison or memorizing the Bible.

I'm waiting for the wife of the poet, everything else is *I love you
very much, and thank you, and hello again*. I'm perfectly willing
to be the husband of the poet, it's all the same to me.

A Quiet Fathering in the Wilderness

There is a quiet fathering in the wilderness. It says, *Fine, my precious fool, step there, if it's your wish to walk half-drunk off the edge of the world, you'll see no tears, you'll hear no cries. Your bones break, the branches break, you die, but here, inside your miserable skin, you may cry all you like, why half the city cries, there are tears enough to fill a dozen rivers.*

Sit at your table in your room and weep, alternate the weeping with rage, there's a show on cable designed for you in your skin, and here's a market of woe with discounts on pain. Try if you like to find these things in a tree, look under a rock, search the skies, you'll see no tears, you'll hear no cries, people are good for some of these things, the wilderness for the rest.

Shall I Tie His Hands and Cover His Eyes

There's no thrill matches standing facing the absolute end of one's being as one has come to know it, at Saturday matinees, in church, riding the bus, or killing some other sentient being.

But thinking beyond thinking, accepting what's beyond acceptance in any vocabulary, here, at the brink of absolute end, no waiting room, no late dues, no free holiday, no second go round, nothing so stirs the investiture of vitality as does the end, why would I care to focus this incredible being on another non-being state called the next life?

As if life is not life but pre-life, the cartoon before the feature. Not just why, but how, can I project some other imagined reality on the great wall of death.

Don't be afraid, be excited. How could this be other than being at the farthest neurons of God's experience? Shall I tie his hands and cover his eyes?

Circling the Details

I'm tired without someone to love, running on God, and it isn't enough,
seeing God in everything, everyone, all action, light, and sun, lying in the
back of a pickup on I-580, watching a hawk, lying on the wind in the hills.

Scratching a dog, with a stance like a young deer, face like a wise, sad, old
man, loving my work, my friends, my coworkers, faces, ideas, memories, lying on
time like a hawk, circling, no fear, no hatred, my eyes on tiny creature details.

The hawk is love of the air, the hawk is love in the air. I look at my hands,
conscious of the love in them, I am love in them, I am all the things I say,
and I'm tired, without someone to love, strong as a young deer, face like
a wise, sad, old man, circling the details, running on God, light, and sun.

The Eternal Ruse

I want you to be mine, I want to be yours, and every time I say that,
I want us to laugh at our little ruse. I want us to merge into one,
and every time I say that, I want us to laugh at our little ruse.

I want us to walk down Paris boulevards and forget who we are
and what we're doing and where we're going, and then we can
laugh at our little ruse.

I want you to be here, because you're part of me, and I am part
of you, and the hardest laugh is to laugh alone at our little ruse.

Being so far apart for so long a time, learning all we can about the
perfect and the imperfect in the world, where learning to be without
is a greater ruse than any we could play together or on each other,

Knowing the ruse of life, and loving the ruse in its face,
the eternal ruse of realities, and the ruse of all the rest.

Pentimento

If you think of me as someone wandering lost behind a mask of certitude, you will never hear a word I say, the words will come like light on water, shimmering, charming, ephemeral, and superficial.

If I decide you are someone guided by a solved system, the words will hang in the air like touchstones, like billboards, and neither of us will listen to hear the soul, to see the wisdom that lives near all our souls, and shines, as it reflects the shining light of soul itself.

The union of our souls, in union with soul itself, will occur in its melodrama, never its poetry, in a common shuffle, never a dance, in banter, never a joyful cry, never in communion or community.

Take off your garments of glory, I will open my eyes and see you. We are without costume and naked, look how well dressed we are.

They Say, Never Believe a Living Poet

If I toss some toys on the table, do I know how
to play with them, when you play with them, too?

Horns, anger, death, take and eat, commitment is the name of
the game, promises are made from the fundamental truths of life,
summer heat, relieved by misty nights, we toss our books behind us.

I won't touch your body, my mind is made up, my mind is disheveled,
beautiful, beautiful woman wanting some kind of savior, I'm going to join
the renunciates except for the attentions of one, I'm going to follow the
bicycle girls, one in particular, at such a distance, I will become inevitable.

If I buy a radio, what will I listen to, if I buy the radio for you? I will listen,
I'm all ears and secret genitals, with my eyes for a contract between us.

Joan of Arc, Reading a Book

You are, or you're very close to being, a woman,
not the poster woman at the barricades, held out
in front of the battered and budding souls of women,
that certainly grow in the fray, nor representing
all those who cannot or will not undertake
the necessary revolution of each one alone.

Life is rife for all of us, from starved to majestic,
from denied to realized, and no amount of battling
by proxy, or in phalanx, in absentia, or in rage,
substitutes for, or accomplishes, the simply done.

How simple to say and unsimple to do, but the doing
lives quietly inside the heart, with the brain for truck,
and the soul, whose flag we carry, survives, in trust.

And when the generals say, *Where are you
in the war?* You can say, *I'm over here, winning it.*

His Description of Her Night

Women can smell you, they can smell another woman on you,
he said, it's the lingering stamp of approval, and in its absence,
they can smell that, so she wasn't home, I thought, when I called,
after our fateful encounter.

My friend told me how excited she probably was that I called,
how miserable she was that she wasn't there to answer, how
breathless she was in her restless, sensuous dream of sleep.

In sweet detail, he painted my new Juliet, moon-bathing
in delicious anticipation, while I saw her changing the locks,
the phone, her residence, her name, her place of business,
enlisting in the Sisterhood of Women Who've Lost the Scent.

Or she is one who has that other sense, the acute awareness
of the one apart, undrenched by popularity, the one with
flared nostrils, and eyes that can see the receiver
rocking in its cradle, from ten miles up.

The Last Resort of Reality

Time is a room where things happen, as regular as clockwork. You can see it coming from clear across the room, people coming and going, a fight breaks out, there's love in the kitchen.

Stand against the cool wall and choose your participation, stay, leave, go home. It's another time room, room for time to take place, consider the skull.

Time is the most powerful stimulant, aphrodisiac, calmative, developing agent. It must be in the air, like a pest-strip hung by the window, breath in the aerosol agency of time's room.

Maybe it's pine trees on the hillside, or it's just breathing and time. Now look at all that activity in the gaping space. Did I do that, or did someone else, or did you?

The Fear of Happiness

The fear of happiness is the reluctance to pursue it past each moment onto the next moment, where it leads to the bottomless pit of every emotion you ever caught, like your shirt on a barbed-wire fence, a little tear and a tiny drop of blood, then on to the foxhunt of the Furies.

So don't drink on the weekends, when all hell breaks loose all heaven, but sit in the middle of it and let it wash over you.

Notice how everything that's good gets you breathing deeper and deeper, You are happy, but you gave it an alias and relocated it to another state. Now get your happiness back home to face trial, and this time, you be the judge.

In Splendid Isolation

In splendid isolation, the world opens up, oh my,
door opening, hand over the eyes, hard to believe
anyone's proclaimed majority, even with sun and ducks
and no nosey passersby.

Kiss, kiss, I love her breasts on my chest, her kiss
when she kisses me, I want to touch every tiny muscle
on her body and her not-muscles too, her beautiful blue
green eyes like beautiful, blue-green, beautiful eyes.

*I love it, she says, when you engulf me. How great was
her language. Do you know ritual? she asked, as we walked
around the lake, one sunny day. Watch this, I said, I will throw
this apple in the lake, rather than eat it, even though it is good.*

She threw her apple, too. We saw that geese have teeth,
or a metatarsal ridge, in their grabby, little long mouths.

The Ink of the Soul

Sweetheart, you'd go nuts in any other relationship
but this one, like the ink of the soul needs a quill
to match the need and the necessity of the words.

A runaway ballpoint pen won't scratch properly,
computer screens are for other computers to love.

We need our love in our hands, as slow as
our hearts at peace, as quick as the dream
flies ahead of the body, blessed to the ground.

We're in love as the mind works, when
free to the colors, intent on a single petal,
hearing the fast scratch of each new breath.

These Molecular Words

These molecular words come from the sunlight and
the deadly nightshade of the gods, photosynthesized
onto the page, the fossil imprint of a leaf from a tree
or monkey bone sunk beneath the primordial goo.

These molecular words live, become, do, and die,
running like engines, in and of themselves, fooling us
part of the time, because we think we see their borders.

But a body of words breathes, throbs, beats,
kicks out energy limbs, and all because
the animal brain gets and gives love.

Physician, Heal Thyself

Being a healer does not mean being a nice guy. Healing is not supplying band-aids or a soft shoulder to cry on.

It is, instead, a mark of love that sits as close to the bone as the damage, wreaked on the wounded, cuts core deep.

First-aid belongs in a comfort station. Being everyone's friend and confidant is like bringing coffee and donuts to the starving masses.

My teats can't fill fast enough to satisfy the many mouths that can never substitute for my breasts' need for the one and only real baby my body manufactures.

Writing placebo prescriptions for imaginary maladies may be good business for some language doctors, but the real healing engages the righteous wrath of those who wish to be strong, join in the healing, pursue the demon cells out of the body, set up an invisible city of their own, say bye-bye to the healer, and get on with it.

Color Me Beautiful

Some women are weird, man, with rooms full of drippy, dreamy shit, cuddly animals, hypnotic colors, soothing language, tales of smooth sailing, baroque, rococo, semi-gothic bathrooms, cascading imagery, pop top-selling novels, pregnant cats, furniture that looks like plants that never looked like furniture, families of creatures, not found in nature, living in cupboards, closets like dreamland interiors gone to seed.

And real lives like buckboard rides, with time spent exposed to the back alley, underbelly of cream-colored insanity, histories of magic gone rancid, cancer-riddled fantasies, and not a hard edge in the place, not a splintered surface apparent, but inescapable secrets of knives twisted in the heart and flesh flayed, organs torn, memories of dreams, but not a real dream within the calloused, heavily-oiled, finger-grasp of remembrance, no imagined joy in sight, but pictures of it everywhere.

True beauty is never pillowed, true love can live in a cardboard box under the E1, truth seeks out the mesa and finds it lush, joy is a bird, that needs only an open window, to light on the sill, and sing its song.

Let's Fly, Baby

The cathedral stands on its own with no need for the flying buttress.
The butterfly puts on her boots and climbs out of the quagmire,
aided by the outstretched claw of the eagle.

Let's fly, baby. We're angel hawks, transformed, our love an example,
an invitation, to the multiple orgasm in the crowded basilica.

Like no mere batch of feathers, I love my arms, that swing
like meat wings, that muscle the air, that muscles back.

Sky-swimmers, we go up in flames, we go down in flames.
In the Cathedral of Flames, we are flame itself.

I love being a poet, I fucking love it, I love these brief telegrams
to the universe, that open up like marigold volcanoes.

The poetry of these days is a gossamer beast.
Slaughter it, and feed on it for a century.

The Four-Handed Table

I have before me that thing everyone speculates about,
the root of entertainments, the source of unnamed anxieties,
experienced in partial agonies, icon of the heart's integument,
the loss of one in whom the sun rises and sets. What if the sun
goes out? What if Apollo throws down the reins?

I have mortgaged my life, without recourse, I have cast my bread
on the waters. All my heart's lung's mouths have opened. New blood
is coursing the body of my life. I cannot return to the diet of lesser days.
I cannot live day to day on aspiration's inspiration, the dreamed-of,
the prepared-for, the satisfactory absence.

I look at her, and everything I am is welcome, She looks at me,
and everything she is, is welcome, wanted, needed, desired,
known, and unknown, my curiosity is global, universal.

Death, grant us this day. Stay your hand, leave us for a time together.
We will not disrespect you, you are resident, be companion, not intruder.
Life lives here, you know each other, the integrity is inviolate. Death,
you have your chair at our four-handed table, leave us the table.

The Shadow Line

There is a shadow line across the face that cuts the eyes,
like a breeze that feels like a blade point, like a water line
across the mask that defines the elements we choose to live in,
some more adeptly than others. Bird or fish, the sky-swimmer
knows them both, he fights the weight that pulls him down.

Like a jet pilot, flying upside down at tree level, skimming the ceiling
just above the cockpit, his out-stretched hands grazes the chandelier.

There's an attractive death in letting go the fierce eyes
that describe an Icarus. There's a faith that keeps him aloft.
This human shape of faith and will cannot be resolved in either.
It, too, is a line of shades, the horizon at sea, twin blues.

Between god and beast, we are winged flesh, swamp angels.
The warm mud we plod through makes the wings heavy,
they lose purpose, until they are tried in the compatible air.

Caked legs kick off the mire, ballast turns to rudder, and we soar in a
completed reality. We stand on an earth whose partner is the heavens.

The fall from this grace can kill, when the fond look back
at the underworld spills the flight in backward dreams.

My Eldorado

What's to be done with the unknown, fields to cross?
I jump at every sound, flowers growing, their growth is
deafening, the earth cracks under the incredible force
of new roots, the sky blackens with petals, stamen
sway like Goliath's limbs.

The wet nose of a mouse, a hundred yards from my boot,
wheezes and snorts, like a buffalo, above my awe-struck,
fallen frame, I am Human, I am Conquerer of Nature, I am
Colossus, yet these blades of grass turn spire, to make me
miniscule, I'm overcome, I've never been here before.

.
In the forest of each new square inch, I trek like Livingston,
praying Stanley is not far behind, I plunge on like Columbus
through the Ocean of the Undiscovered, my entire dream
made real at each tick of the thundering clock.

Triumphant

I am triumphant, in my second-hand tennis shoes, my jeans,
with the circle patch in the right knee, my thrift-shop shirt,
my homemade haircut, my borrowed five dollars, I am rich.

A poor, hustling man crosses the café, selling locks, someone
asks for the bagels, the fog rolls in like the onset of glaucoma.

All these breeds of people circle some ill-defined center of self,
and I am triumphant. I am clean and clear like a glass globe lodged
in the spring soil, the sun has discovered me, the rays like me.

All yearning dissolves to a curiosity when the heart surges without
obstruction. The gift of love frees the heart to its purpose, to pump life
to the myriad blood fires in the cells, the body becomes a constellation
in a universe grown larger, pushing back the edges of infinity.

Come Down to a Common Kiss

I don't see bits and pieces of those I've known,
familiar hurts and pleasures, in your semblance.

I see you as clearly as if I'd seen no other, like a bone
dragged out of Adam's chest and presented to him
as the full birth and generation of a parallel solar system,
not shadow planet, or clone amalgam, but twin genesis,
by the same hand, not déjà vu, like a reworked screenplay,
but the muse's handiwork, sprung full-blown at the poles
of the wide world. I recognize the originator and the art.

You are no one I've ever known before, yet I stare,
astounded at the inspired clay, to make a life so known
and unknown, in this visible texture, like new eyes on
ancient materials, the whole of human history
come down to a common kiss.

The Challenge of Wonder

I cannot love you too much, my love falls short, mortal
purpose fades, this close to the ungraspable universe.

You are beyond definition and my poor matching words,
there's no safe language to dress you in, you are a window
beyond which the gods dance, whose casement describes
the limits of comparison, and yet how fine have inspired hands
designed the shape of your opening to the pantheon beyond.

My sorted out world has been shaken to the absolute absence
of careful clothing, without comfort of role or idea, leaving
the heart a taut membrane, untaught by experience.

This is the brain, packed with education, unable to give its learning
a lesson to compare you with. Here is the soul's breath, around which
everything is born, not known. I have surrendered to my heart, beyond
my memory of it, my chronicled existence fades to antique paper.

I am filled to immortality in the moment of our being together,
as purely real as the gift to make us flesh.

The Enactment

I stand in terror in the presence of my waking muse, who calls me to the declaration of my love, merely dreamt of, in younger days.

It is no more nor less than saying, as at the bar before the hard judge, I feel, I conceive, I act, here's my pitiable self at work.

Here are the weak parts of my attempt to manufacture a life. Here is my belief in the truth and how clumsily I've enacted it. Here is my fear of the condemnation of my self-enacted life.

Held against my felt and conceived existence is the evidence of inadequate action, I am a terrorist of self, I am a doubter of strength, I am a cruel enforcer of ideals, I am a braying baby.

It does no good to apply to the order of the committed. I must leap, and if I come up wanting, there's no excuse in time I am flesh to flesh, soul to soul, the spirit of love itself.

I can no longer spend time trusting my nature to rebel against the intrusions I allow upon it. It's time to come clean, so the body at work is unblocked, past the petty triumphs of suffering, beyond the beaten and strained in life.

It is time to complete the sentence, exonerate the spirit, push back the stone of the confined room, admit my entire fear and stand in front of the past.

I can no longer spend time naming the enemies of my heart. I name myself, by naming my love. I enact myself, by enacting my love.

The Full Crisis of Love

Put aside the chronicles of wasted time, when you enter this room,
here is the full crisis of love, where a kiss comes down on lips
like spring comes up in bloom, as slow as the rose unfolds,
as full as each week makes a new year, where a few ingredients
make a stew greater than the table of elements.

Do not bring old eyes and ears to this occasion of mixture,
what is born alchemic cannot be melted down by argument,
or sorted out by formulae. We require a new name,
and the uses follow.

The Contract of the Theatre

There is but one place to do the work of loving others, it is with them, in the heat of battling the confusions of self and history.

The many characters of our drama must come to the stage, must give their oration, must die, if they are to die, must triumph, if that is their fate.

In our play, we catch the conscience of our kings and beggars, our nobles and deceivers. We allow the petty lords their quarrels, but to hold the stage is the greater work, it is the heart of the drama.

Love of the entirety gives time and space for the enactment of the passion, however long or brief the night, however deep the tragedy, however foolish the comedy, to keep nothing in the wings that speeds the realization in whatever scope it unfolds.

On the mutual boards, we discover all our character, until the truth is spent, in horror and beauty, and the last of us remains at the curtain, unburdened and unfettered by what we have been, or what we may come to be.

Memorial Day Prayer

I want to dig hands in my flesh, grab great hunks of muscle and twist them, dip fingers in blood and reverse the flow, pull my limbs like a wet towel from the sink and squeeze out the filth of old pain, I want clean muscles, clean bones, clean blood.

My body is a rug, with paths of abuse worn in, with grime of neglect and denial ground in the pile, in need of cleansing, wringer cleansing, sun in the backyard beating, I am furniture sat on, sat in, damaged by too many cigarette burns, stains, vandal slices, vomit.

I've taken into my shape the shapes of hurt and damage. A storehouse of ghosts and demons, I need exorcising, like a house, good in the wood, strong in foundation, beautiful in structure, full of history and use, open to the spirit, but tormented with specters that bang my doors, darken my windows, and inhabit my rooms without right.

I want to move unafraid down every passageway from attic to cellar, and see the pain, name the pain, give succor to the pain, and have it be gone, be gone from my muscle, be gone from my bone, be gone from my blood, be gone from my breath, so that spirit can take up residence, and know that I am its home and none other's.

None other can own me, none other can live in me, none other can call itself proprietor, so that I am both companion home and heart. I am home in my heart, and my heart is home to my spirit, but I have been a house of death, and the old dead belong in the ground.

The Dream's Awakening

By candlelight, I lie beside her, dreaming an old dream's awakening. I love her, as I've never loved another, without possession, unpossessed, free in airy bondage, our arms around each other, a completed circle.

My tongue easily releases the words, my lips the kiss, my brain rejoices at the clear beauty of love.

The obstacles to great thought fall aside, when the heart gives consent to the dream's awakening.

Linger and Savor

Children, linger and savor, savor each moment,
play out your parts, love is discovery.

Learn each other like you learn yourselves,
watch over the curious movement, a stretch of muscle,
a change in shape, the colors and textures of day to night,
season to season, every small patch of the other is a garden
in cycle. Be yourself, in transition, a bursting of life.

Each seed of sensation comes volcanic slow,
so is the earthquake slow, so is the tidal wave.

These forces will overtake you like the dawn,
come up with such incredible speed, the mind will
lock the body's mystery in memory, like Pompeii,
the population caught forever, still alive.

Diamond in the Sky

The sky was thick with stars, they used to have skies like that when I was a child,, but the city lights drown it out, the thickness of stars encircles the earth, but the sun is up on half, and our own light obscures the rest.

I shook like a rug, cleaning itself, shaking off the accumulated horror, I knew I would, I had to, it was inevitable, I wanted to flail about in the mesquite, screaming, ripping nerves out like fire-damaged wiring.

Doctor, I said, I hate medicine, I hate hospitals, I hate the entire idea of cure, heal me. She handed me the scalpel and never left the room of night.

When I awoke, she lay beside me, under a thick, wet blanket of fog, clear like crystal, I could see all the way to my heart, still weak, but pumping in its translucent ribcage, unobscured, some of the thick undergrowth pulled free from the root.

I knew it wasn't fear that cleared the skies but pointed the way to the cause of the fog in my eyes, eyes that work for the heart, as well as the heart of the mind.

Darkness Before the Dawn

It's always darkest before the dawn, your flashlight batteries die,
it rains, your matches get wet, the sky portends total eclipse,
dark-furred bears come crashing, the tent collapses, rocks slide,
an indeterminate bestial howling commences, you die a thousand
deaths to replace the ticking of your busted watch, childhood fears
are overtaken by adult fears, angina begins its pincer attack.

I write this, the next day, after the deluge, post-trauma,
re-trusting fate, which needs trust, like saying, I love you,
every morning in her still sleeping ears, despite the turned back,
cruel snorts, cold shoulder, and the rancid winds of bad food.

Fate is an inescapable marriage of one's life to life,
with all the irreconcilable differences intact. She's reborn
in your eyes, she shines like Apollo's gift incarnate.
It's always brightest before the night.

The Look in the Eyes

Adam and Eve were monkeys, or apes, if you prefer,
they lived a million years in the Garden of Eden.

They quarreled over the checkbook for a split second,
until more bananas fell past their satisfaction.

One day, they looked at each other in a wondrous way,
and the look echoed in their eyes like mirror on mirror.

Suddenly, it was time for God to write the Bible.
Thought and sin became simultaneous that fateful day.

Now we are familiar with such moments, but, my,
how much that familiarity resembles falling bananas.

We are still living in that same garden, and yes,
we have more bananas, everyday, all day long,
and now God must remainder the instructions.

The wondrous never died, but we die when we forget
the look in the eyes that teeters on and defines
our pristine origin.