

FROM THE MOUNTAIN



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Mere

Silent air.
Clear light.
Dark earth.
Quiet water.
Where rowan
is reflected.

Dark air.
Quiet light.
Silent earth.
Clear water.
The green
promontory.

The 'Sybil's Headland'
where the heart is healed.
The 'Lake of Shadows'
where the mind grows calm.

Over all the sky
the white clouds
moving
in the still glass.

Quiet air.
Silent light.
Clear earth.
Dark water.
Shore of stones.

Clear air.
Twilight.
Quiet earth.
Silent water.
This is the last place.

Aphrodite

Chamandra, when they strike fire in you,
you show blue-white eyes of oblivion.

Alkanet, mouth of the hidden stamens,
tight closed corolla, now bleed root-red.

Tanacetum, deathless, do they call you
ditch, roadside, wasteland?

Sagina, between the sacred feet,
leaf, where the white pearls scatter.

Anagallis, you are the well of tongues,
dark waters swallow you.

Centaury, Chiron's find, gentian,
waists of the mares.

Vervain, sacra herba, divinatory one,
Tell me how they know you?

Night

It sings.

A voice, a voice, a voice,
star, star-white.

Black, black
poplar, mind-light,
it sings.

It shines,
a moon, moon, moon-comb,
moth-bees.

Still, still,
pipe, leaf-edge,
it shines.

See.

Lost one.

Old Ballad

How does she ride?
In silence and fear.
How is the Bride.
White is the tear.

Say where you die,
beguile the light.
Moon on her fingers
silent and bright.

Time is the liar.
Mind is the briar.
Pain is desire,
Mortal is fire.

Where is the gold.
Flesh is the white.
Where will it fall?
In ashes and light.

Three Anonymous Motets
from the C13 French

The Guardian of the Wood ('Je gart le bois')

I guard the wood,
so no man steals
the leaves or flowers,
or pleasure feels
who's free of love's powers.
I love so faithfully
no pain touches me,
hot or freezing hours.
And I guard the grove,
the flower of the wood,
so that no man steals
the crown, except for love.

'En mais quant naist la roseé'

In May when days are dewy,
and frosty nights are past,
he's fine, who has his sweetheart,

since then he's doubly happy.
What art brought heart to this pass?
How can it help but beat fast?
Now I'm doubly happy,
since she, who my heart has,
whom I've deserved so truly,
she gives her whole love to me –
my body and my heart has.

'Tout li cuers me rit de joi'

All my heart is full of joy
to see your beauty here:
but to have to go from here,
leave you, pleasant, sweet and true,
take the road away from you,
makes pain, from joy, appear.
There's no other way I fear,
except to go. I pray you,
By God, don't forget me,
if I can seldom see you.
Ah, my sweet friend it has to be,
it hurts me so to leave you.

From the Mountain

‘Only the cold wind on the river, or the full moon over the mountains, caught by the ear, becomes sound, caught by the eye becomes colour. No one forbids me to make it mine. No limit is set to the use of it. It is the endless richness of the Vortex of things, and you and I can share our delight in it’

Su Shih (Su Tung-p’o) 1037-1101 AD, Sung Dynasty.

From ‘The Red Cliff I’

1.

When you think it is silent
it is silent.

It comes from nowhere.

It goes nowhere. Silent.

Whichever way –
it goes. Silently.

Don't move.
Don't grasp.

What's known
that's worth knowing?
Stillness –
is not ignorance.

2.

Will there be quick hills
and these mountain streams?
Will there be places,
untouched, maybe,
needing nothing?

In a thousand years,
pine, stone, water?
If there's no way through,
no way back,
be free.

3.

Point, describe.
Don't analyse. Don't name.
Childlike words
take a lifetime.

Folded stone,
split trees, poke
the moon.

Mind's rubble.
Blown, burst, empty.
Jupiter, Mars.
Turn. Flow.

4

Fragile, to eternal,
it collapses,
to bedrock.
Leaf, to air.
Stream to star.
No names.

How come
mind, can't see

the dragon?
This mountain
warps, slides.
This water
carves,
to get back
to the uncarved.

5

One day the people go,
wake up.
Run this yourself
if it's worth something.
Pine, sifted needles, gold
dust. Light
on top of cliffs.
It gleams.

One day, learn,
unlearn.
Delight's not for use.
Desire goes nowhere.

6.

Hawthorn. Dry birch tangle.
Bitten grass by the river's edge.
Go far
and sit still.
Watching
is ceasing.

Swirl, as it changes.
Blue, white
flowers, wild between.
See light,
it's strange.

Don't think
we can't make
a world
like this.

7

Look-out. From you, are
women, men, cities, grass,

cliffs, trees.

Far light.

No edge.

Feel the bark, leaf,

cones, berries.

Wash your hair

in fir winds.

Say

what you

don't see.

8

White moon's neglect,

Crystal blind's stars.

Took rocks from the lake,

sank jars under seas.

Better though

to find winds,

follow streams,

below leaves.

Veins run these hills.
White silk space.
This house
is empty.

9.

It never passes the trees.
It wavers.
The shadow is never
its shadow,
when you look,
but it was there.
Now hollow, hump, pine.
If it comes through
it's water, air, fire,
light, lightning
or
thread of leaf,
one right word,
soft dust,
a stone.
A trick of light,
you see.

10

This tree,
three thousand years.
These stars.
These moons.

Dark crag
many summers,
holding many snows.

Rain in wind.
Black granite.
Heart of the wood.
Cold.

11

Blue smoke
where trees go higher.
Here's the blue
flower
in crushed stones.

Sane here.

No Thing will
fret the mind.
Trees float,
on mist,
No Thing is.

12

Greed, hate, dross,
dumb Science,
bought minds,
names, names –
useless knowing,
bought bodies
mindless show,
ends here.

Wind, cloud
is the Void.
Nothing to
despise, decide,
achieve, desire.
Clear view.
The lake
is meditation.

13

Mountains, rivers, cities,
transparent, fragile,
tremble, vanish in rocks,
winter snow, night rain.
The lichened bark,
etched pattern,
random light - Now - chimes.
Leaf-flow.
Dark cliffs,
old gorge.
Cool, the Void.

14

This power
takes no possession.
Mountains are.

This force
makes no demand.
Rivers run.

This wind
has no authority.
Clouds flow.

It is.
All night.
It is.

15

Woodpiled tree-bark,
old roots, rotten trunks,
twisted, scaled lichen,
grey, green dragons.

Blossom comes
right out of boughs,
white flowers
over grass.

Bowing, bending in the wind
rustling, shining, quickening,
whir of soft
snow-fall,
silver light,

slow breeze.

Empty. Cold here.
Go where
mind pleases.

16

Things that increase
by being given,
grow, by sharing,
deepen by use,
cannot be traded.

Facing the mountain,
feeling the silence,
indifferent beauty,
thoughtless, mindless,
emptier, deeper.
Not negative,
not uncaring,
neutral, vacant.

Hills that make
something

stumble inside,
slip in the wind,
eyes closed, lips closed.

17

What now? Do you see it?
Pale wind in grey valley.
Climb down
two thousand feet.
Pick up
an old track.

Everything here is
complex.
Nothing here is
simple.
Doesn't need names.
Works at nothing.
Effortless action.
Instant movement.

Can we see it?
What now?

18.

Don't believe
in all those things.
Gods, walls, people,
superstitions,
rules, dead imagination.

Better the Void.
See the one Moon,
over the river's Vortex,
rise in the dark sky.

Mirror of mind.
Glass without dust.
Clear your heart.
Bathe your eyes.

Don't believe.

19

No Mind.
Rocks and trees.
Tracks in deep cloud.

Watching mist pass.

Green moss, thick
climbs branches
then clothes,
from blurred leaves,
wet grass.

Silence. No Mind.
Beat the dust.
Pile rocks.
Don't grasp.

20

The dragon
of a thousand years -
cloud and light
on the mountain.

Fir by fir,
stone by stone,
climb to silence,
find the rock-trail.

Nothing moves.
Everything stirs.
Nothing turns.
These things go.

In the light
it fades and dies.
In the night
it rises, it remains.

21

From the high cliff,
moon on the lake.
From the grey rock
wind on the trees.

This mountain
carries the moon
on its back.
These firs
hold the sun
in their arms.

Lost in oak and cedar,
the green
root of a thought.

22

Mind goes, with the stir.
Wind shifts,
in the darkness.

What we destroy, destroys us.
Delight
is mist in the trees.

How to use empty space,
and not play
with things.

23

Blunt rock.
Dull light.
Dim thought.
Clear feeling.

Fir trees
pierce the winds,
where
dragons writhe.

What we call nature
slips away,
eroded, corroded,
abused, used.
Think.
No Mind.

24

Whatever we kill
kills us.
Creatures, all broken deer.
No need
to kill to eat.
Why
eat to kill?

Burn dead branches,
drink stream water,
under a rock face

by oak, birch, yew.

Earth moves.

Water moves.

Stars are our
wind and fire.

25

Bark smell.

Green firs
ranked along valleys,
but larch is
yellow, golden.

Conifers with steel hearts.

Logs and a shelter
in fine mist.

Cold foam
in creviced rock.

The valley's root
is mind's spirit.

This pass
is heart's gate.

Stop, and be free.

26

The black cliff.
Red lacquer,
shadow gold,
pine sun.

Midnight winds
bring rain
out of sparse cloud.
Polish this mirror.

It is hard - not to be foolish.
It is easy - to think too much.

Give. Be still.

27

The subtle mind
is not primitive,
is not native,

but clear.

Everything human
is not useful.

Dark hills,
empty streams,
grey rock,
at nightfall.

Don't go finding
the master
here, there
in the deep cloud.
Ignore what's past.
Be still.

28

The wind past the summit,
silent, Void.

There's nothing
Humankind can't uproot.
But a hand
on this mountain

feels the stone.

Hawk goes down
miles of fir
in the vortex.

Horned lichen
on the tree-stump
grey, blue-silver,
shines.

29

Feet in the water.
Cloud, cloud, cloud.
Grey, drowned
cold stone.
Heavy pine root.
Light pine juice.
Silence has no name.
Long grass. Alders.

From Void, Mind.
From Mind, words.
From words, vision.

From vision, Void.

In one place,
see it all.

30

Open light.
Flat sky.
Gold papered
half-moon.

This white light
sets. In the mind.
Tree cries
in the ravine.

Hills and seas
always move.
Oak leaves stir
the wind.

31

Peace is for

children. In them,
nature is
not yet mind's violence.

Find child words.
Dig a hand
into wood floor.
Watch the birds.
Make the heart
deep.

32.

Shapeless the tree
beauty.
Dim the stone
beauty.
Empty the sky
beauty.

Shadowed the water
beauty.
Wavering the flame
beauty.
Dark the earth

beauty.
Deep the valley
beauty.

33

Don't move
Don't name.
Wordless
non-action.

Heaven's Ocean's
billion stars
thread
the earth shine.

New-born
with no cravings,
take refuge
in the small.

34

So simple it can't be seen.
So shallow it can't be crossed.

So still it can't be moved.
So small it can't be held.

On a hundred foot cliff
the high aspen.
Wreathed in leaves
the silent face.

35

When you think it's simple
it's too complex.
Fame is the ghost
the famous dream of.

Here's grey light
tall cedars,
clear air,
mountain streams.

Old man
in the Vortex
sees through
your transparency.

36

The truth is what
words confuse,
can't be told
is either
there or you
don't see.

Teachers don't mean
to be tricksters,
deceivers,
liars.

Whatever
they say,
that's
not it.

37

You don't need
to do things
to be there,

to see it.

Moon in the water,
on distant lake shore,
seen from a mile high,
drowns looking.

Crystal, blue, clear
wind turning.
In the deep stream,
grey, red rock.
Pine-frost, fir-bark,
stone over white sand.

Heron shifting,
feather-coat dancing,
blown in the wind.

Open

Open, Open,
the ones that are open.
Thread drawn
spider-thin, fine
and, at the end,
nerve-light, heart's-flowers
glow
at the stillness, we are.

Grass, grass
lifting and moving
on wind's lips,
darknesses, whitened,
turned, massed,
and, at the tips
waves, air volumes,
blown,
in the silence we are.

Planet, planet,
white rose of light,
corolla, fire,
bright in the black,
pale eye rotating on night,
and, at the cusp,
something, beauty attends,
home,
of the emptiness,
absence, we are.

Calm, calm,
lake of the heart and the star,
peace
where the lost too have peace,
in the ash
that falls from the graves
soft, grey
cloak
of the grasping,
craving, we are.

They will be,
dwell in a place,
child,
candle-lit hail,
through darkening air,
and in the flames,
spirals, tremors of light,
dark, blossom, red, blind
pain
of the nothing,
nothing, we are.

Open, open,
they find you, then you will
open,
life drawn, tenuous, rare,
and in the hour
death-light, mind-whorl,
sigh
of the darkness,
darkness, you are.

Watch

What we see, what we are
and not what we do.

Under the surface of grass
rivers once, used veins of earth,
twisted like cloud trails,
star canals,
out there, the far lights.

Forests gone, land gone
under highways.

But this house has no floor
and floats on the Vortex.

Too late for
the naked and barefoot
unless we can see
behind ice, the stars.

It empties, it frees us, we free
from the bones of the place,
from the ash, from the fire,
free, at the gate,
on new grass

under the white leaves, the blossom,
deep green
dry needles of fir,
on bark, on rails
that we don't see, can't see.

Night roads,
light and cloud, frost and wind.
Old words,
float through the trees,
in the mind,
and those who can
point,
keep on pointing.

Silence before dawn.
Thing seen, things done, never twice,
show the way. Snow light.
Europe cold, but winter
cherry over T'ang hills
in the chill wind, sheds air.
Dry fir, plum branch,
bent bamboo,
all shapes of light,
stand still, shiver,

shimmer, glisten.

Never

Never look for your heart in the gate of the stranger.
Beauty is memory's wound, is the eye of the guardian,
raised wings in the dark, of gold and of silver.

Never look for your mind in the hands of the lost ones.
Soft ash, see, gleams of white, sharper than needles,
wax from the candles of fire, from the dumb drowning.

Never look for your soul in the house of the stranger.

A wing, a flower

A dry, pale winged transient, over water
a day, then a day, this fifty million
times goes back to the start, more than we are,
though not even the first age.

Tiny, winged, pallid darts over
wrinkled grey water. See, in the small,
the minute, the idea, that uniqueness conceals,
the inferred, the wrong
generalisation. Time to begin
again. New, yellow flowers like stars,
tiny in oceans of grass, tormentil's yellow.
You can't play games with the Void,
only bow with the mind.
The wing lifts, the flower
creeps, waits, shines.

Leavings

This is the angle of fire,
son and son.

Oblique, you must look obliquely.

This is the water's crook, bend of earth,
air's corner, tilt
of the bamboo, the reed.

This is the house of light
where the animals cry.

Earth floating for nothing,
for no-one, this sea
can it feel the load
of the moonlight? You
must look slantwise, between
the shelves, the lines of the earth,
to see the house no-one built,
the transient place.

A shelter, a house for the ear,
a sensitive movement of light. You
must look at the angle
of every unnoticed corner,
edge, hedge, gate, leaf, book, hill,
where ear still echoes.

My son and son, you
must look into
the layers of the earth
at the only forgotten,
whose words are
curious lispings,
whose inarticulate cries
hurt the wind, in the wires.
This is the knowledge.
This is the angle of fire.

Mind – Matter

Solid, the melt-word, the micro-
atomic, the glue
of the dark behind light, so
solid.

Solid, the body of tongue and
visceral silence, heart walls
on lung walls, where mind feels
something, as solid.

Solid table, chair, place of the flower,
where being brightly
unfurls, and is
solid.

But light, as air, as water, as deep
field of space, time,
is mind, so fragile,
river running life-process, light,
so light.

From the almond-tree

Stone memories, loosening
the hair.
(in the cavern that she ascends)
the golden life-body
of emptiness,
touching what's lost.

Clouds, rain
bitter
(of hands without thorns)
the night-rain
of white chillness
soaking the skin.

Out of the forked tree blown
hair that's like mist
(of the pain she retrieves)
the pale life-body
of void, gorse,
whitethorn, ice, snow.

A Little Course in Morality

Don't be confused, love is all. Not,
if we were stones though or trees,
insects or reptiles, but we,
what we are, means empathy is.

Don't be deceived. Without word,
with senses, beauty, mind is,
truth, delight, that is
where we are, sign is.

Don't be subdued. Create
again and again, act, sound, tongue,
hand, do and give,
as we can, flowers.

Don't despair. Say the heart.
Love, show, create. Given's
not less. Shared is not less. Fight
for what you believe in. Endure.

Getting Lost.

In a dark moment, under the ice, sealed
dome of stone, planet
on clear plate of light, opens
its eye.

Its fire, coldness
touches your breast-bud
sheds starry seed,
damps with its streamers
the flower of lips,
sepals, corollas.

Her cry is the scorpion's sky.
At the ford, on the left, the death-figure
raises ice arms
laps at semen, culls the mandala,
fused gold, fused silver, fused sun and moon.

In a dark moment, lifts
the lid of the earth,
shoulders dead
soil, bruises feet, bruises hands

on the interminable real.

Heavens

Over the angels, earth's silence turns.

Bruising the wings of the angels, galaxy burns.

Be silent, don't fly, to find the core of the angel.

Outside the angel, neutrality sings.

Stunning the angel, universe rings.

Imperfect - the cry out of the soul of the angel.

Without the angels, compassion's alive.

Harmony is a non-angelic drive.

Wind's note. Cloud's eye.

Watching the City

Lanes, lights, dark stir. Wind
in the fir, behind, blows on down there,
to the rim of the well, where multiplication is,
in concrete's shudders, the hum.

Nature is margin. Time
is the process whose, interchangeable,
players retreat, and are changed.

Flow replicates. Create, break, love, live,
beggar, ruin, believe, this unreality greed
makes real, this is the place
of planet, of species, where clothed
or unclothed, betraying each other, deceive,
beyond truth, beauty or love, the engine noise
of a world grinding uphill
to the silence, where shoddy is king.

End of beyond, poverty turned to your face,
paid lips, token trees, fall of light
over the refuse of night, generations,
spent sperm of millions, unminded
hoardings of messages, rails, eyeless towers.

Evil's here - helpless good. This is mind's
mad creation, the sad creature's contrivance.
Dark, lanes, lights stir. Obscure skies,
hidden stars. Winds off the hill blow down
to indifferent process, not nature, made
by accretion greater than by a creator.
Anthill of inner hells, spiritless dust,
a pain of loosened sensations, that radiance
of energy's darker consumption, of wheels that turn.

What we made will unmake us,
what we built as a gaol.
Dark, light, lanes, stir.

Birch

All dark against the evening blue
but the birch trees' cylinders of grey,
white, silver. Froth of twigs, upward
V of arms, gathering to Jupiter risen,
one diamond in emptier azure.
Losing it all in the darkness, mad city,
until there is nature, mind, then
no mind, no nature.

Fir, the great wave, poplar, sky-lance,
holly, lilac, old pear, crab-apple tree,
but birch, the silver, tender, dark branches
painting inverted sea's stillness, drips
silver light, and one, unblinking, planet,
in perfect silence, in winter, in cold,
mast from the frigate of dark,
miraculous brocade.

Remember

Remember the three, the one
whose hand the god reached down and touched,
gently, the back of the hand,
stirring pale wings, and, with his white
crown of flowers, soothed the pain,
that kindest of shades.

Remember the second whose hands filled with sand
stones, soil, wishing the power of the star,
its green, glittering light,
throwing his net towards shadows,
dwindling there, a vanishing head among crowds,
a sunk fire, a pebble lost on the shore,
by black water, under serpentine skies.

And the third, the one
who nurtured the flame,
out of ash, still, out of ash,
who added a stone, made a prayer
to the shadows in time, for the bitterest tribe,
with dark gasps, through the depths,
a stirring of wings, in the dark.

Remember the three.

(Note: Heine, Mandelstam, Celan)

Breathing the Void

Over the snow
that holds
the colour of shadow,
the black fir, the green.
Empty nature.

No place in us, for the wild.
No place in the wild, for us.
No place.
No mind.

Wind over the snow, grey, cold,
the colour of shadows,
stirs black, green, of the pine,
down that side of mountain,
where, once, there were
five kinds of owl, six kinds of deer.
Nature. Empty.

Reaching Down

Touching my chest, with her hand,
said, ‘ Again, another, another, until....’
(Your hair is dark gold
over the stream
and the eyes, O, the eyes
seen once, and seen.)

Stands, framed in the light,
glittering eyes, slender fingers, long,
saying, ‘Find, from the pain
how to bury the self, again.’
(Your hair is dark gold
over the stream,
and the eyes, between
the mountains,
seen once, and seen.)

Waits (not for me). Remembering
is memory. Gives them her... Names...
‘Hear, again and again...
Can you?’
(Your hair is fine gold,

dark eyes, dark fires,
in the light, seen,
over the stream, and, once, seen.)

Touched the eyes, the forehead,
the mouth and the lips,
said, 'Here, and here... Find the beauty
of pain, the beauty of beauty,
of difficult breath, life,
and learn death, here... and here.'
(Your hair is dark gold,
and over the stream,
the eyes, O, the eyes
seen once, and seen.)

The Twenty-Eight Stations of the Heart

1.

To desire, desiring what can only be desired, what desire destroys, no longer desiring, ever, and never, achieved, desirable.

2.

To delight in anticipation, delight, in security, be happy, in other's happiness, lose self, in another self, celebrate being.

3.

To make the other, self, to love self embodied in other, from words, thoughts, make in the semblance of other.

4.

To remake, refashion, confuse, construct
the other as greater, as what conforms
to the image, the dream, the desire.

5.

To find the one perfect place, time, other
and then to be there, in the place, in the time,
not to miss in anticipation, expectancy
in uncertainty or regret, but to know.

6.

To see what is loved in things, places, times,
symbols, radiant fires, echoing radiant thought,
external analogues, that outer world
as image of what is inner.

7.

To desire to be desired, think to be thought,
attend, to be attended to, seek to be sought,
rehearse the other as self, the self as the other.

8.

To find the self in the other, only self, mirrored,
but to demand, of the other, self that is not self,
and know the other for other, but also the self.

9.

To attain, what, attained, is no longer attainable,
start of the new desire, lost peace, anxiety.

10.

To mismatch the means and the end,
unattainable desire, or the attainable undesired,
the attained now undesirable, new desire unattained,
the means without object, or object without the means.

11.

To wish the other to be free, and be constrained,
to be free only in our image, to watch it, constrained,
die, become non-existent, what we desired
to see in being, and to love us.

12.

To envy the elements that surround the place, time, where we are not, to be jealous of all possession but unable to possess, what we can never possess, hating the other's happiness not come from us.

13.

To be driven by signs, words, images accidents, emblems, guesses, those dark externals, whispers and dreams.

14.

To suffer, to be in suffering, to suffer to be, to neutralise out, make potential, delay, mask, conceal, the returnee, the wanderer, the familiar, suffering;

15.

To want, not wanting what given destroys, all peace,
but wanting what transfigures, the peace that soothes,
and then recreates pain.

16.

To wait, to hope, to expect, to be disappointed,
renew anxiety, be racked.

17.

To wish to alleviate self's pain, to concede all power,
to display love, to show attention, create love by love.

18.

To wish to appear to disregard, or concede, power over
ourselves, to try and prompt, by indifference,
a desire for power, to make indifference, love,
to gain the other's attention.

19.

To wish to enter the other's mind, to discover the self, ignorant of that other's thoughts, love, hostility, or only a bland indifference.

20.

To destroy the present with the future, future with past, past with present, corrupt by imagination, overlay, anticipate, agonise, over-prepare.

21.

To be blind, to refuse to see indifference, irritation, to hope by displays of pain, renunciation, to hold, by what can only be viewed indifferently, or not believed.

22.

To imagine, in order to evade destruction, pretend, enhance, fantasise, to make happiness out of lost happiness, to recreate love of the object beyond, and beside the object.

23.

To fall in love with renunciation, with pain,
prompt unlovable pity, hope for contradiction,
search for love's signs.

24.

To kill, to poison, to anger, so as to be remembered,
to turn away towards peace, to love what kills, gives peace,
and then to mourn, to try to keep alive, to attack
indifference that cannot care, in hope of a love that cannot
be.

25.

To silence so as to be free, to destroy so as to find peace,
calm, habit, nature, art, and creation, to deny, turn away,
end, hide.

26.

To feel hate die with love, to feel jealousy, envy die down to indifference, to postpone, to evade, to be free of anxiety, turmoil.

27.

To die without dying, feel death, atrophying, until it cannot be felt, being dead, and no longer dying.

28.

To replace the other, to re-project self, to attempt once more to define and refine the other, the self, love, desire, the world, and time, while there is time.

From the First

From the first, the dark hoe, that cut the world in two,
from the first, the scythe, from the first plough,
from the saw, the axe, that first felled the firs, cut cedars,
cleared fields, broke into the woodland silence.

From the first fire, the first drill, what we lose,
faster and faster. Dead sand, burnt trees, by the sea,
from the first.

From the first, hoe, from the furrow, the fire, that pyre
over the wordless and nameless, that closed the eye,
that conceals, what is lost in the furious,
fertile present, the concrete, metal and glass,
the fierce transient that is loved, the fire
that the eye encourages to, and the body enters.

From the fallen poplar, the limbless oak,
the flower-free ground, the smashed rock, the quarry,
from the first limestone shelves, from the very first, giving
up what outweighs what is taken, a comfort, a truth, a love,
that outweighs what we have, what remains, that completely
outweighs.

From the sea, where the wind is, the salt and spray sound,

from the tree, the stillness from soil, the heat cold and light,
from the air, from the night, the wild boiling, stellar and
mindless. From the first, hoe moving in darkness,
from the first plough – Play, you can play, but you
depend on the first scythe, the wheel,
on the crankshaft, the deep drill, the rig, and the rails.
On every beachhead an oil slick, down every dark slope the
spoilage, through every spent wood a roadway,
from the first hoe, from the first plough,
from the first scythe.

Gatha

Between the past and future state
stands the traveller at the gate.

Here we love, but now we part,
in the silence of the heart.

On the Island

On the island of the self, where self's betrayed,
mind moving in the dark, on those sad slopes;
from the island of the self where time's betrayed,
I saw your moving hand: I touched your heart,
your silent hand, your foolish heart.
On the island of the self where self's betrayed.

Astro-physics

A star,
shines on the last, highest slope.
Is it Altair?
Capella, Arcturus gleam
Vega and Deneb hang,
in a web of fire,
in a darkness, greater
than every human darkness.

Are their spirits stars, all the vanished,
ashes, sparks in the air?

A star,
shines down the veil of Perseus, by
Andromeda's silence.

A star,
knows light,
listens to light,
becomes light.

Is in Draco, is in Serpens:

Is it Antares,
invisible one,

Dis's bright blazing guardian?

Not now, not seen now.

A star,

Is it Dubhe,
foundation, and kingdom?

Ashtaroath?

Is it Aleph, Vav?

Is it Adar, Av?

Is it the blood giant,
the pale dwarf,
or the grey one, is it the grey?

A star,

glistens, shines,
between the fingers of dust,
vitae novae, nebulae,
those in the dark field,
and those under it,
those who could, and
those who could not pray.

Is it Regulus,

at the lion's core,
in the heart
of being?

Somewhere

City of flowers and the rock
grey, ash under foot.
There are places we should not go to,
places,
we will not go to,
where the tracks are darker: further down,
the rails, run on dead sand,
the wind crosses sere grass.
Places,
where no planes land, no one dares
to see, no one remembers, and
none to remember.

City of streets, light-filled
smiling, and the stone,
the cinder-black clay under the feet.
See it? There ?
Clink
of the couplings, wheels
making their way, by Lethe's runnels,
By Styx, by the dead marshes
of Acheron, there.
There are things no one can say.

There are names no one
speaks, no one asks for, the names.

City of light, and forgetfulness,
it is you, who come from the dead,
their fire-tongues crying,
whose soil splits open, rocks crack,
to show, in the fissure,
the wound
that no one can feel,
no one can know.

Not catharsis. A wall,
a stubborn wall that weeps wet dirt,
moss, earth, ash, air,
the concrete, solid, time that waits,
for you, city of light.

City of voices, language, tongues
we do not wish to hear,
soiled music, acid powers,
O city of psalms
in the heaviness of glass,
in the voice that wails
above and over the word,
prayers for the people.

City, of such innocent choirs,
there, now, by the rails,
on the sand, in the sere grass,
on the dark soil,
blowing the heart.

Owls

The owls cry, all night, under a white moon,
spring moon, higher.

All night the owls go down mask-like winds,
crying, territorial anger,
crying, a warning, a paralysed fear,
crying, light.

Making the heart glad, deep in the night, owls.
Deep in the silver branches, deep in mind's eye, cries
wild star-hunt of wild owls.

Down granite walls, down cliffs of trees,
down lakes of moons, quarries, headlands, scree,
the diamond-crying owls.

What else calls at midnight? Savage eyes,
in soft rotating turrets, gold-flecked eyes,
clawed, feathered eyes of stillness.

The owls cry, tonight, to leaves,
to earth floors, to the frozen ones,
in a deep caress, owls cry.
Through the hollow starlit chamber,
through the eye's cavern,

through the heart laid bare.
Crying the ages, the aeons,
the resistance, the survival,
of nature, of the boundary,
are unbroken, are on station.
Calling, unafraid, calling, calling
on the hilltop, in the valleys,
by the river, on the mountain,
in the gorges, in the quarry,
through the mind, and through the trees.

Recanati

(For Dee)

A dark body, hand on chin, moon-gazes,
the sweet smile lingers, memory moves,
towards a little singing silence there,
a mute, far singing. Luminous spirits meet
in mind's electric arc,
the lost inside the lost, the remembered
in the remembered, folded down
into what stares back towards history,
reality, in a memory, in a poem, in a reader's eye,
mirror in mirror, crystal lens on lens.

Between the gilded mountains and the sea,
a pain of mind, recalled by pain of body,
white goddess, moon-white, of the scented May,
spinning the thread of fate invisibly,
spinning the thread of words, of poem, of thought,
into the silent future, memory of memory,
light inside the diamond, the girl
forgotten in the goddess, the goddess
unremembered in the girl.

Gold in his father's mansion, lines of fire,
in book on book, piled to the high ceiling,
a sweet Parnassus that a twisted frame
climbed, with a girl for Muse, crescent
burning to crescent, pain to pain,
and both declining, golden, in the west,
under indifferent stars.

How we would like to meet you, secret spirit,
for whom this world was weight enough:
your mind was light, but she still danced beyond you,
the white shining one, your hand could never reach
in her perfection, like that girl pointing,
in Leonardo's drawing, Miranda from the Tempest,
pointing there,
towards the pale stone, where the dark torch sputters,
the fluted columns, and the granite lid,
we call the sky

Storm

Washed by the rain, Verrocchio's
green bronze, hand to the wound,
waits on the wall.

Art and Power, barred stone,
and the crown of exiled laurel,
dark with homecoming.

Medusa fixes a stone city,
San Miniato lingers, Fiesole,
under the dome of thunder,
cradled by clouds and hills.

Leonardo, like an albatross in the air.

Lorenzo missed the knife.

In the palazzo,
a white fountain sinks.

Sun, rain and sepulchres.

Waiters dry the gleaming chairs.

In the morning, here, beyond the bells,

Savonarola arches, agonised, black to the sky,

the squared tower sways,

the pigeons land,

an earthly beauty glimmers.

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