

The Flower Keeper

I kept the flowers
you brought into my room
and placed in the vase on my dresser
more than a year ago
now

without you, the flowers
wilted and lifeless
now

the room so quiet
without the sounds
of our lovemaking
laughter

now,
without you here,
I have only the delicate flowers
whose petals fall at the slightest
touch

now,
I have just the memory
of love.

Being Me

I follow the path along
the bottom of the ravine

descending as the water
will in spring

bumping against the rocks,
the trees, filling the space

here, falling continually,
hoping no one sees me

stumble, grab for the branch
which breaks, spilling

me on my face in the mud
where I roll around

laughing and clapping my hands
until I am done.

The Blank Page

On my desk there
sits the clutter of the days

books, papers, some coins
a half empty bottle of Courvoisier
my one and only lip stained snifter.

I look at the blank page
and wonder for a moment why
I persist.

I hear
the church bells in the night rain

and I resign myself
to it,

nothing to rely on now
but the act of writing,

not love, truth, beauty
these beasts run wild

and cannot be tamed
when they are needed

however many times they do
startle me when I least expect them
and impress me no doubt

they only enhance,
they do not sustain.

Only the work
can nourish me.

So I push myself into the poem
struggle with it, live in it

until sometimes I feel lost
in the words of a chaotic chorus
of echoing voices.

Frustrated, I run from it
run till my legs will carry me
no more.

I fall on the ground
gasping, out of breath

when one whisper from the chorus
very quietly says:

How to explain love
or a hand even

to touch gently
a lover's cheek,

fingers, a slight
quiver

two sighs
and no speech

What can I do?
I get up and walk home

let the words roll around
in my head

smile at my friends when
I meet them

play with the children
make breakfast
wash the dishes

listen for whispers.

Damn Your Taste
In Homage to Ezra Pound

For Paul Caster

I

If there is no high road to the Muses,
where does the low road lie

where is the wreath that does not crush
thy head

the patience you said
there would be about it?

We are waiting, Ezra,
standing in lines and waiting all these years
since your death

and no one has said
how many words it would take to say enough.
Enough.

As if
words will ever do for us what
eyes lips fingers feet hair and
the hidden things we were clutching
in our hands held together, speaking
our last words for each other,
laughing and lonely—I love you.

II

Eldest son
keep watch on my fire

ere embers dwindle
and kettle goes cold.

Down with vanity
grand couturier

for elegance alone
is not true artistry.

We have different goals now
different rows to hoe

as atom for atom
and firm as granite
the word is made perfect

by executing
our own lines demanding

our own image
in this, our own confounded age.

III

It is difficult now
to negotiate your labyrinth

of names and places and titles and languages
of pseudonyms and puns and poetic inventions

not, no not at all, that I mean
to boast of our present complexities.

We simply failed
to keep up the pace.

Oh, sure, it's a different
time and place now, but . . .

Hell, there is no excuse.

IV

I must mention it,
yes, that you were kept in a six by six and a half foot
cage

your eyes were the size
of the moon in those days

and that I have wept at the thought of you,
whatever you did or didn't do,

sleeping on that damn cold dirt floor,
peering into your tin can toilet,

where did your memory go,
your weight and your strength

when you collapsed,
where did your isolation take you?

I work, I slave
beneath you.

V

Then, too, the Italian was a tyrant
and the German a traitor to humanity.

Those who loved you most
despised you on that microphone
and the vitriol performed.

Thirteen years in the loony bin
before your nation could forgive

a lifetime spent to what end?
You said, "Le papier Fayard was then

the burning topic. Who is there
now to share a joke with?"

So let us not speak basely now
as you and I are not like that.

VI

This:

Praise be to Pound
O' Son of a Bitch
Hosanna in the Highest
And all that Shit!

VII

I am talking about the backs of books
that are jewels

and the hawks that are hawks
that are hawks

endless passage,
dreamless drifting on an empty sea
eternally murmuring

as the wave sweeps in the shallows
to the depth of my ankles

you are swept to the aether
with the young loves and their Muses

and I am in over my head now,
but you have left

me a line
to grab hold of, yes

a line with which to pull myself out of this mess.
And I am telling you all now

that my generation has not taken enough
from Pound.

VIII

I have set my caged bird free
and she trills most excitedly now

while I traverse gingerly
attraverso la terra abbandonata

hiding behind the sophisticated technologies
we all prize

as the bird flits from branch to branch
and I develop a twitch in both of my hands

trying to find a few poets,
a few poems to pave the way

listening for a song
not yet sung.

IX

Wait.

Take two full, deep breaths

yes

the measure: courage and verve
wherever you find it

in the struggle to attain form
everything is in motion

in the infinity of being
a chaotic profusion

electric lightning flash
and thunder rolling in unanalyzed

this is *CHUN*: difficulty at the beginning

after the first birth
there are others

X

I cannot explain Ezra Pound for you
nor do I intend to try.

I take in the Muse
by reaching my open hands toward the heavens,
naturally

which is a common position
for prayer.

It is as Ez says it is
cryptic

don'tcha know
don' ya jus' kNOW

cain't yez jest tyell?