

7th Inning Stretch

A heart that hurts is a heart that beats. -- Bono

Aerated to vivid crimson, the thickened
Blood oozes slowly down the serrated edge
Of love, gravitational droplets falling
On a life path suddenly lambent once more
with longing.

We surprise ourselves, late in the game,
With our capacity for love and heartache --
Not the wild grapeshot love of youth, exploding
In our faces, scarring the principals and
Innocent bystanders alike, collateral
Damage scattered across a landscape of loss
And even-now-unassuaged regret. No, this is
The love unlooked for and unanticipated
That strikes without warning at some nearly twilight
Unexpected juncture because the heart ever
And always wants what it wants without regard to
Obligations undertaken with eyes wide open.
This is the love we have prepared for with the love
We are committed to: gagged, strapped to the mast,
Restraints cinched tight with seamen's knots, hearing but
Unable to heed the siren call that, answered,
Would lay waste a life and unravel a tapestry
Woven with painstaking care and sacrifice
over a score or more years.

This is the gasping sucker-punch feeling long
Forgotten which must now be endured until
Breath returns with something akin to perspective:
Love's labor preserved, chaos averted, vows upheld.

But louder sang that ghost, 'What then?' -- W.B. Yeats

Under Foreign Skies

Here in a foreign land
I have loved a woman
Of dark hair and sad eyes
With a love I could have
Given to few others.
Yet as I walk these
Foreign beaches and
Listen to the sea
She loves so well,
I can find no single
Star in all the heavens
That will lie to me
And say she shall ever
 be mine.

Grand Canyon Mules

Mute, infertile, the
Burdens of others
Strapped across your backs,
You labor on in
Heat and dust and thirst,
Insofar as known
Without complaint, though
Perhaps what seems like
Dumb resignation
Is both more and less:
What point in braying
Over a karmic sentence
That admits neither
Appeal nor parole?
Better to focus,
One step at a time,
On climbing out of
This life's abyss of
Pain and penance: *Get*
Out, back to the rim,
The cosmic bondsman
Paid in full for now,
And rest, in sweet hope,
On higher ground.

Above Linn Run

I renew the boyhood pact once more,
For the intellect and secret heart concur
That someday I steal to these woods
Never to look back, or wonder what has become
Of the discordant life I leave behind.

Reverie

I remember my inconsolable youth:
Irradiated by loss, fearful of
Spontaneous combustion;
The heart held incommunicado
 against its will.