

5 Poems

New England

I don't really want to be

in

New England.

What with its tall, withered trees

And tall, withered ideas

That are lofty and preside over all the other small inklings

of this vast country -

I still find myself happier

away from its tradition.

A paradox of sorts:

I love this tradition far more than most things.

It is etched into my DNA: Irish travelers braving stormy seas to get to these shores, and then generations of weather-battered New Englanders: colorful Octobers and ski poles, ice thick and solid as their own reliability, harsh winds, warm laugh, alcoholism, eternity.

Behind it all the literature and art like stoic expectations, the sisters and cousins, the pressures of how to be

All seem so much lovelier when I only see it twice a year.

Which I think very horrible of me.

I don't really want to be

in

Massachusetts.

What with its small windy streets, steep slated roofs and red brick chimneys.

Snow heaped in cold banks, white-blue and frozen

As all my love affairs here.

Strings of lights over dark streets,

Trying to bring cheer and prosperity to a deeply-rooted people

With deeply-rooted beliefs.

I hate it all for it's quaintness and it's simplicity, how it does little to challenge, and even less, to excite me.

But when I am gone,

When I am living on the beachy shores of California, I feel unstable and rickety.

Like the ocean might keep gnawing at the coastline until we all fall into it,

Stupidly,

We'd laugh.

We'd be high on sunlight and lethargy, too optimistic and happy

For me to ever take seriously.

I'd think of old times, like old pictures – faded and more nostalgic than reality should permit:

His breath – her laugh.

It all takes a sepia hue of unreality, that is so easy to believe in the sloshing world of happiness and contempt in California.

When I am gone,

When I am living in Paris, with it's millions of people, I feel empty.

Paris with its nonstop pace, its languid, thin people and beautiful faces,

I miss New England with a deep, bottomless ache.

I crave the pub where I can buy a pint and know the bartender,

The pointless bickering fights with my sisters,

The streets of that small town I know so well,

The explosion of green in the country in the Spring

And the smell of mud and lake water.

The rolling hills like air filled tufts of a green blanket,

And the belief that there is something more, *much* more

solid than the champagne cocktails and shrill, pointless conversations at 2 in the morning of a bar whose name is annoyingly a one syllable English word.

Ah yes: tradition.

The tradition that calls back to me, my ancestry and *my* deeply-rooted belief.

It recalls to me all the times spent in the forested-green.

It pulls me back, so here I am.

And now my plotting brain, thinking,

How how how how how

Can I get out of New England

Again?

And do I hate it more than I love it,

or is it the other way round?

Twelve Hours

I like small dark spaces,

I like crawling into them, sideways, laying into them

Like a crescent moon

Fitting into them

Like a puzzle piece, whole and complete.

I like steady rhythms like waves in the ocean

or your hand stroking my knee.

Repetitions of soothing familiarity,

And yet –

I love to flee.

I like throwing away the old. crunching like

Yesterday's newspaper,

Hurling into the trash without a backwards glance.

Scanning the sky, the earth, the sea

For something else,

Something different, new, more interesting.

And then walking, blood pumping healthily

Red cheeks ablaze with warmth,

Strange and twisting streets.

Looking up to the tenth floors and wondering
Who is up there right now?
And why and how?
Feeling energy unfold before me and the world unfurl itself
At my feet.
Feeling young and unafraid
Passing my hands over stones of a hundred different
Tales.
Thinking of writing my own,
And then wondering about if I fail.

I like diving deep –
They say all men dive, but none like the whale –
So, then, I'd like to be like him.
Creating a song that evolves each season with
What my life has added for me.
Singing it for you to find me, to warp your way
through time and get to a place beside me.
I'd like to think that a sunset is just as beautiful if viewed alone,
As I have heard it should be –
But I can't help thinking that is just false.
I'd rather fall down together surreptitiously
than sit as a single silhouette, lonely and somber
Watching the last light fade
For another 12 hours.

Hiking

It streams through the trees and into
our eyes,
It's closed beneath leafy
canopy where shade pervades,
 but on those rocky summits it
 Radiates
Hot and balmy,
Fresh and bright,
what it is to be alive:
 Sunlight.

It chases us back under blanketed green,

down the ravine,
 through the waving ferns
like a rolling ocean they
 sway and ripple in it's
 terrestrial embrace,
stretch on like a field, forever.
We delve between them,
Scaring pheasants
Who fly swiftly away,
wings, beating in splotches of
sunlight for a moment only before they flap out of sight.

I blink back bugs but
Some persist, swarming in my eyes,
Now I can't see the path.
 I turn to you,
You approach with surgical delicacy,
Our sweaty faces inches away,
 Your blue eyes serious and darting.
 My brown eyes watering.
Hold still, you say, and I oblige
 And you get the bug out
 Triumphantly
 Our backs to the sunlight.

C Major

If I get a cat I'll name him C Major
after your hours spent strumming it on
the fretboard.

Inversions

You said,
Like I knew what that meant.
It was supposed to be simple
You turned it all on its head.

You left to go to choir practice,
I stayed behind
doing what I do best:
Reliving it all in my mind.

I once heard that writers write to experience thrice.
You left to go to choir practice,
in a thunderstorm in Florence,
I envied your artist's life from 4,000 miles away

on the east coast

of the United States.

Winter in the Woods

Here the wisdom is as old and unpolished as the hills surrounding us. Life's beautiful tragedies, cold weather, hot coffee, warm fires, laughing, comradeship, beers. Things seem more vivid, more real, here.

And there is sadness because of this. A deep quiet sadness that wells up because of the lack of shine that cities gloss on. In peering into the vacant abyss of our life every grand stretch of darkness is revealed, wide arching bouts of loneliness. Like driving from Stockbridge to Lenox, in between each small spattering of warm lights and main streets, there is nothing – just cold pavement, windy roads, pure darkness and the feeling that you're floating into nothingness. Your feet might leave the ground. You might never understand anything ever again.

You might just keep spilling your heart at every old corner and leaving dripping trails behind you where you go, making it a routine until your whole world is raw and red and your whole body is ripped open with feeling.