

Contains five poems.

Tempest Song: Butterflies

I have launch'd forth from the cliff – Emma Tatham

At the house where I teach my private student, we push
the squeaky glass door to watch the monarchs billowing.
Thousands, no, millions flail in the blossoms,
pink and orange lifebuoys.

Before she can say she wants to help them,
I am practically on my knees. A gentle loop and cave. Should I teach
her to praise this huffy cloud of mottled pinwheels? See them beg
with their dissembling eyes.

In shorts and flipflops, she stands riveted. I say
this is an audition -- for her, of course.
She smiles at this idea, petulant preteen, augurer of stars,
she has been chosen.

Using her lawn as emergency landing strip, is it their sheer
numbers that amaze? Were they hungry on the Arabian Peninsula?
That must be it. Instruction leaking out of there does not exactly still us.
Gosh, look at that hottie!

What we're dealing with here is the super generation, the childless ones
that'll survive winter. I glare at the setae, black bullet points
stacked for a domino loop. The roll-down of their
proboscises is their game time.

Like her own, my student thinks their gluttony natural.
Sated with nectar, a flap, and they're dwindling.
The garden flops. The show is over. She turns
inside to her books and laptop.

Fireproof is Our Promise

These northern winters are my stained-glass window.
I come home, look how the shadow flames are shot.
I throw my damp boots off. The bell-shaped organ
thuds with rhythm, my back's ablaze with promise.
The gas heater works wonders with the sizzle.
This schoolgirl wrests her cockled sheet from heat.

I gather in my mug to drink the heat.
Steam rises from the steel works to the window.
Our mother stirs fresh tea and pours its sizzle.
Out of the earth the natural gas is shot
to generations with its all-out promise
churchgoers' mouths draft from the booming organ.

Red and blue tones hew their scales to the organ.
I'm drowning, let me be consumed by heat.
My socks are leprechaun hats without promise.
Rubbernecked, I peer in the flushed window.
and bite my pen as my toes are tingle-shot.
Beside this clock, my math sums are a sizzle.

My sister moans her skin's a grated sizzle,
but why am I still raw in every organ?
From opposite our house, appeals are shot.
Shivering, I add a notch of heat.
Ashed stub in workhand, Mother cracks the window
to shouts. How strange; since fireproof is our promise.

The siren sounds, the passing of the promise.
The neighbors' kids traipse in. What's wrong? They sizzle
and choke; they'd seen their mother through the window.
Her mouth gaped wide, shushed gargling in her organ.
A flood of tears. CO poisoning? The heat
revives as they sit on our couch. They sip a shot.

Their father remarried, but our earth is shot.
We clever kids fulfil our teachers' promise.
Dug from the core and fed by the whitest heat,
I burn the furnace though I fear its sizzle.
My cells have noted; in my blunted organ,
sorrow blows its fever through that window.

I'm warned and warmed by heat behind the window.
The air is shot with vespers from the organ.
Our good promise is put out with a sizzle.

The National Pantheon in Lisbon

Before I came in from the blazing heat, a cat was watching me
on the steps; let's say it was black, golden eyes sleepy with faith.

Puzzled, I stood by Amália Rodrigues' sarcophagus where the wall oozes forth
her gracious loop. I've sized up my life with streamers and confetti --

good and bad depend on my sense of humor. Still her voice is guide.
How is it possible that not any of the younger singers at the Clube's

fado nights made me want to trade in my mother? My new friend
said she was Romanian, twirled glass after glass of mediocre red wine.

Each faded red swill grew as a symbol for gusto. I simply could not detect
any connection to melancholy. Let's expect all Romanian or expats

are so levelheaded. Guitar mouth, lettuce frock, tapping foot, what are visibles
without a good song? I was moved to tears, immigrated to words

I guessed by their mimic. Oh there. The Pantheon is topped up with royals --
how they used to purr in gold tones: please don't dispose of us. Strays.

I entered one of those huge rooms where João's and Marias are masoned
in cream praline boxes, when a stone mourner made me jump.

Poof! He rose too large, but otherwise he was uncannily like a real man,
stifled in period bows. The bare head, stiff neck, the dreaded long coat.

I never wanted to forgive art for taking me this seriously. I cannot be
like a stone with music behind it, although any hollow can be tapped.

We crisscrossed the city for a long time. Where light didn't stream,
music did. Sometimes both. At least in Lisbon, endings were frayed.

Opera Night, Tel Aviv and Gaza

My eyes and mouth are singing opera in the Yarkon park.
Without noticing, so much of what I do now is a vast
consuming.
Give me any music. Play. On this August evening, the grassy knoll
where Radiohead had
an unmasqueraded ball, is dotted with citizens in summer gear.
Thudding
from giant black speakers. They are a bat, the stage
its body.
Sublimated guilt operates with sirens, but sublime ones.
And the night is my helmet. I try hard not to hear them,
not to fear them.
Not a problem, the bombs are pretty inaudible.
They play Nabucco. All of Abigail's shrieks are in stereo.
The mayor of Tel Aviv has come on. In his jocular way,
he retells the next scene.
Part of the fun is the rude ignoring, like you're back
in school and ignorance is key. I sip a lager
and wish my taste for meaning would be less pale.
What can the music do? It is no longer one, nor young, has
not been for a long time, since it was gathered
from all corners.
The tablecloth of my voice has been folded out and flapping so much
it has to be held down. My friend next to me opens one of her three bags.
The swift nick mosquitoes tolerate
any inadequacies.
When they mistake my leg for a cactus fruit
I finally start to feel better.
Does anyone here wonder what happens in Gaza?
I stick my head in this moshpit. Problems become an eye
for a tooth.
Soothe my ear then. I don't play deaf purposely.
One can never be overprivileged. I never lost a tooth.
Let's invade the precipice first, and then add precious sounds.
Precision bombs,
rattling keys, coloratura commands, and the coup of slammed
borders.
The slave choir gets lolling. If you drink out your beer
and follow bloodstained tradition, there is sure to be
an encore.

Summertime Fly

As told by Daedalus to his followers.

Summertime and the son teaches the father to fly. I admire how
he stands on the highboard in his kanu, pockets inflated, cords w
axed

I feel
the fall
in my defense
I have none
prostrate
vulnerable
in my fatherly
pride or not
that he instructs
me to fear
nothing in the air
stories
my son on
the landing of
the stern sun
the big boys
that pushed
his head
under
jeer by
the backflow
clamping
blue fingernails
clarity in
the chlorine
he clambered up
to show them
bastards
I have a fear
of failing
wouldn't ever
mimic
his bareness
of body
suspended
in my high
shutter speed
I found him
shuttling through
my life
mouth agape
I can't believe
his daring
he is my son

he can't be.

or