

## Dismembered

Nineteenth-century dilettantes took manuscripts apart. They just enjoyed it. Clipped a gleaming border here, an image of the Virgin there, and pasted down their thefts in books, on rainy afternoons. Apparently, they weren't impressed by craft or art or age: just saw a jumble of nice bits, and took whatever pleased them best.

My fragments are now scattered. You have chosen what you wanted, put those parts in your collection, and feel no responsibility for what you've left behind. In fact, you dare not look too close. For then, you might perceive there was a reason to the whole, a real integrity, an interweaving of the shiny pages that you thought were good enough, and those that you found tiresome--essential for the meaning if you cared to read the book, just with no flash of gold, no lapis blue to catch the shallow eye.

A manuscript, once broken up, is sometimes called "dismembered" to suggest the wrong, the violence, that put it in this state. It is no overstatement to contend that you have wrenched me limb from limb, and kept some pieces, so that even if Our Lord appeared and offered to assist--emerging from the closed loop of a "P", where someone now long dead inscribed a miracle in miniature--I'd still be incomplete, for lack of trophies on your wall.

I cannot have the years back that we spent.  
Nor can I tear your fatherhood from you,  
my gift in bloody sacrifice.  
You cannot put this right.  
Not that I think you even would.  
But you could hang your head, at least,  
and let me limp away.

## Back from College

I haven't seen my younger son  
in months, but know him instantly.  
He's walking towards me down the street,  
six-three, with loping stride.

Yet suddenly, I hesitate.  
I have to reach so very far  
above my outclassed stature  
to embrace his surging height. This giant,  
smiling wide with arms outstretched,  
does seem to know me pretty well,  
and yet--for just a fleeting heartbeat,  
I am not quite sure he's him.

He is majoring in classics, and  
in Aeschylus, Euripides or any  
ancient drama, recognition is complex:  
a sudden reconciliation  
between what we thought we knew  
about someone, even an intimate--  
we sacrificed her to the gods!  
and what reality replies--  
just look, you dope, she's here!  
We struggle with correction.  
Never mind just how compellingly  
the proof rings in our ears, or what  
deep sorrow would be cured in us,  
could we believe our eyes.

When we decline to let the truth  
about each other penetrate,  
then that is how we come to grief,  
and know the world too late.  
And yet, we need to pay  
a quiet homage to our errors,  
even mourn a bit for wrong beliefs,  
or truths that now are past.

With my beloved son, I pass the test,  
at least for now, and can refuse  
the sheer ingratitude of clinging  
to what was. He's twenty-one.

He almost glows. I see him walking  
towards me, on a sidewalk in the sun.

I also know that he is still  
an eight-year-old with sandy hair,  
a Little League first baseman  
with a playoff game tonight.

I'm not deceived. Just slow  
and shocked, a little bit recalcitrant.  
But all the same. I wonder.  
Couldn't hurt to find his glove.

### **The Turn for Home**

The light is gold and rose when looked at straight  
but all the edges gleam with blue. The sun  
feels heavy with more energy that it has time to give  
before it sinks back into night. The air is densely packed.  
I wade against the current, stepping out to get the mail.  
I throw a frisbee for the dog, and it is slow to rise.

I feel suspended on a point, a knife's tip, or the peak  
of height reached by a stone cast towards the sky.  
That full extent, the highest pitch or farthest stroke,  
bears in it the return: the stretch, the yearn insists  
that there's somewhere behind you that you feel  
the distance from. You feel its call--the lure, the tug,  
the signal telling you that you can't stay out there.  
You must go back. There is somewhere to be  
where there's a space shaped just like you, a place  
where things resolve, and only are just what they are.  
A place where journeys start and end, where separations  
from the world, distinctions and estrangements, simply close.  
The turn for home is what you feel right in the reach.  
In August, I breathe deep, and wait for one green leaf to fall.