

YOUNG ELDERS

Here in the long grass life makes sense –
here under the leaves of the box elder saplings
that breathe and sigh in the breeze,
here in the leaning of life toward the long beams of light,
I lean to and fro with the elders and feel
that they are the wiser, though younger, than I.
For they recall each day what I had forgotten
so easily.
Swaying and leaning through their life,
they grow still to soak in light.
They reach and stretch and bend themselves
to bind illumination to their core
till light bears fruit –
fruit which drifts upon the breeze
that sings and sighs through soft, cool leaves –
fruit which, touching the earth, becomes
another swaying, singing, sighing, stretching
light-soaking sapling.

A DREAM

After Michael William Balfe*

As sleep fell heavy on my eyelids
So that I could not raise one row of lashes from the other,
I felt your lips brush my forehead –
Gently, like a breath held in flesh.

I woke to find that I was elsewhere
In a room with ornate furniture, and bedposts
Like trees. I thought I had slumbered
In a forest – but the bed was too soft.

I cast away the shimmering coverlet
And put my hand through silken scarlet curtains
And floated like a leaf to the floor –
Softly, for I was not sure of welcome.

Out in the hall, I found myself the lady
Of a house where servants carried out my bidding.
I wore the jewels of a noble,
And like your eyes, they shone for me.

I found also that my heart's dreams -
Secrets I had caged within no soul but mine -
Were provided to the smallest of details
Save one wish for which my heart wept -

You - your warm hand upon my shoulder,
Your sighing breath upon my neck after you kiss me,
Your fingers buried in my hair,
Moments when my heart fully opened.

As morning pulled me from a great hall
To an apartment with one bed and a leaky faucet,
I pressed my lips to your forehead
And smiled as you opened those eyes.

*More specifically, "I Dreamt I Dwelt in Marble Halls" from Balfe's opera, *The Bohemian Girl*

A SNOW DAY

It snows in March
As if to mark the state of worlds inside us
With the transitory snowflakes of what should be spring
For us in Tennessee.
No sooner do they touch the skin than melt
In beautiful, white, interlacing purity.
I have been a snowflake on your skin.
I melt away and leave what seems mere coldness,
Yet your summer will be sweeter
For my having stopped spring from growing
So soon full.
Do not stir up;
Do not awaken,
I whisper to our flesh and to the earth.
And though you long for warmth,
You also long for me until its season—
For the whisper of my voice,
For the folds of my white veil
Which soften once-sharp hills,
For peace,
For rest in silence
For cessation of your strivings:
For a snow day.