

Druid Dreams

For love of a woman
I came to this desert.
For love of a woman,
And now a child, I stay.

Nor do I begrudge it,
For here they've given me
By far the greatest share
Of the happiness I've known.

Yet still I dream
By night and day
Of rhododendron-bordered
Streams where dappled
Indifferent sunlight
Spills down through
Canopies of green
To find and dance upon
The gurgling waters below
While, above, the cool and murmuring
Breeze confers with leaf and limb.

Equatorial Blues

Always beneath the play you write is the play you meant to write; changed but not abandoned and, with luck, not betrayed, but shadowing still the play that has come to be.

Alan Bennett, Untold Stories

Substitute 'life' for 'play'
And 'live' for 'write' and,
Ah, there's the rub!
Fifty years on and still
Working on the rewrite.
No, not abandoned,
Not betrayed outright,
But surely the steady
Erosion of long-held intention:
Too many roads not taken,
Too many dreams deferred
Or given up whole while
Flecks of aspirated hope,
Life-blood spatter, pock the
Canvass of a doldrummed life.

7th Inning Stretch

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 grapes 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

Cuchulainn Forsees His Death

Friend Laeg, when Cathbad's vision comes to pass
And my time is nigh, strap me upright to
Stone or trunk or limb so that my foes may
Not be certain I am dead: I would fain
Unsettle their bowels with fear to the last.
But when the Morrigan, who shall attend
My death, has at length flown from my shoulder,
Take down my corpse and place it on a pyre
Worthy of my deeds and the tales to come.
Set the night afire and commend my
Spirit to the *sidhe*; invoke Ferdia
And supplicate for the remission of
My crime, that he may greet me in friendship.
Gather my ashes; bring them to the shores
Of Lough Erne and there hire an oarsman
To ferry you to its deepest point, its
Darkest waters, and then cast them to the
Goddess that dwells within. But if broken
Geasa, petty jealousy or hard-earned
Enmity bar that path, turn your back on
Ulster and carry the urn to the isle's
Furthest extremity, where Three Sisters
Guard the approaches of the western sea.
Set the urn in a cave among the cliffs
To await the coming of a saint yet
Unborn who will descend from his mountain
Oratory and voyage to lands not
Now known where bronze-skinned warriors await the
Coming of their doom. There may my ashes
Be kept until needed, and then painted
On their foreheads and cheekbones -- not for hope,
Of which there is none, but for courage in

Their final hour. There with brothers not
Of blood but of common fate my shade will
Reside unto the end of days, perhaps
With Ferdia at my side as in our
Youth. You will join us there, friend Laeg, if it
Be your wish, for the land is rich and vast.
We will haunt the verge 'twixt pasture and wood
As generations pass, and one day in
Early spring or perhaps late autumn we
Shall come across a bard of farm and
Forest pondering his craft as he leaves
His impression on the sodden earth. We
Shall draw close and whisper in his ear of
Heroes and battles long past until his
Soul shivers and he exclaims '*the utmost
Reward of daring should be still to dare!*'