

Ars Poetica

Once in a while, I enter a place—a place within, and time slows. It's no drama, no glamorous detail, no glistening dewberries I might catch sight of on the side of the road, which I could've picked as a child, nor the smile of a beautiful stranger on a train returning me to the memory of an old lover. Instead, it's more like: the lamp in the corner of this room looks like another lamp that I once had. And there might've been a striking figure of a strong Hungarian woman built into my old lamp, or perhaps it was never mine but one I passed in a restaurant, singed and covered with dust, I don't know, but what's certain is the lamps relate. I see them together, I feel intensely, and I know that this is poetry. And while I've begun writing through a recollection of my own, I can see now that the lamps remind each other of each other. I can see through eyes larger than my own—although not the universe—a striking figure flickering before me, and I can't say that I recognize myself—this body of mine in a magical room.

Condensation

In order to make myself cry I have to put on my red coat  
and walk across the bridge because I like to keep  
my disgusting grief to myself,  
which gets me going, makes me violent toward the world  
and even as I am surrounded by clear air I imagine  
under me a river made of solid rock, and here,  
produced in me, is emotion—  
and once I arrive home and climb back into bed  
I can feel much more strongly  
the rock running inside all over my floors, without  
all those people on the bridge saying  
how quickly the river is flowing today,  
and they say things about me too, on flyers—  
that I must be so unfeeling, apolitical,  
an animal of no place at all, and I don't lie and say,  
*my heart feels as if it's made of one hundred little cygnets,*  
*and in their aliveness they stir up a heavenly compassion within me.*  
I don't lie. I am preoccupied,  
looking up at my own arm, in bed,  
how it tapers up to my watch.

Sunday

Next July, I sit in a cocktail bar with a new lover.  
It's a modern place; the walls are slick concrete,  
and a leaf floats atop my drink. He wears a purple shirt,  
and I happen to like it. Neither of us have seen the sun  
for days, only vivid heat and the incessant moon.  
*July—what a beautiful month*, I say. He tells me  
he was once forced to jump from a plane, and I think  
of asking which state he fell into. *Nevada*, he tells me,  
but I didn't even ask him. I used to have a canary,  
but I don't even have it anymore. He talks for some time.  
It's so erotic in the future. There's no beef or cream  
because people like to keep slim. I've been to Nevada,  
and I have many percepts. One is me as a moving picture,  
an innamorata. Suddenly the roof falls away. *O*, I say,  
looking around again, big sky behind me. *O how I love  
my own life.*

Chestnuts

The light is changing. On the steps I wait for a great  
resetting of things. The cold wind blows leaves  
and hair into my eyes, and I can't see which of my neighbors  
have just come home. I will all this natural movement  
to yield to me but it doesn't ever listen. It takes all  
my concentration to talk to the sky like a great thinker,  
a person who has faith. Movement ahead—is it me  
or my lover back from his walk? He isn't happy with me.  
*Your soul, he always says, is restless like a prisoner's*  
*but you aren't even a prisoner.* I wait for the desire for myself  
to pass by. Many times I do this. Light changes again  
to dim light.

Ekphrasis

Inside is a sort of panic about the world—compression translates  
and brings us to a field. The wind presses the field, its look subdued  
as if absent, as if we are nowhere. Yet the field, yet my body emptied here,  
kicking up dust into this wheat or grass. I'd like it to be green,  
but it's yellow. I'm told it's beautiful. *I am happy*, I tell the farmer,  
who listens close. I ruminate like  
an animal, searching for spots of gold in the faded grass.

In history there's no rhythm that's not evil. There isn't, is not any thing  
here in the dark but blood where it stays hidden, pulsing in the wrist.  
The must and the moonlight. Infrequently cold light, cold color light

softening out the airplane. Ice cracks into a lake where two sort of pine trees hug  
each other and move into the wind, yield to the Foehn wind  
as it sweeps and creates the lake and the perfect silhouette.

The moon and the wind conspire to move me. I am released  
as a tree with a twin, but we are in the lake made by moonlight: makes light  
not black. I see something so shapely I can feel the curve in my hand. The wind  
comes from nowhere, because we are on the edge of earth. The powerful thing's  
veins are so gray that they're warm, too. And so we too embrace, not because  
it's the only thing left, but because of the rarity of ourselves.

Why is the sky filled with darkness while the clouds are hot with harsh light?  
I see these lines, their persistent softening and distinction. It's strange to me.  
Why is the earth paved like it is? We pretend we know these winds, but how many times  
have we died unexpectedly?

It is not desire, not how when I reach for something it's gone. It's more

like: my discovery is a trick. The unfolding fruit conceals itself. The light hasn't changed, as I'm in those long, bland hours when the light's pure.

As I approach the flower it's not there. It's not so much a slipping but like my eyes change what they see and how; all those little purple things which dance blur themselves pleasantly. I am not in a place but inside of my own breath and blood, so this beauty never risks boring. Not outside of life, not a dream nor a memory but a smudged painting which seems to breathe on its own. I am not a body but eyes which connect through a pasteled string so thick it's also the same color as the blue sky and the pink of my fields, blurred, sinking.

It's more like a twisting of the heart. This leads to a quickening of the heart, but it is not a quickening. I walk on the icy street, almost wondering if no feeling even exists. That I've lost everything in between. I'm changed and frightened. Presence is pure and I cannot speak it. Time has changed me.

Total whole of one,  
intimate vision—  
absence of color.

Pictures do not flash, in fact there is only one thing I can see, but it's a secret my heart keeps from me. Total one of all, connected in an outward circle. I do not believe it's dormant in me. It's some kind of heart labor upon a sense. Something that's never been known before and is forgotten after the work is done. Clear oil with a certain flowery smell somehow looks like a certain sneaker.

This is not working anymore. I can't keep buying pies and talking about the past.  
It's a beautiful river, my mother and sister are beautiful,  
but I can't keep doing this. The light is not enough; I need inside me the soft  
movement of water.

There is a plant here, it's astonishing, flat. The leaves are dull green,  
the flowers barely pink. Yet I'm compelled  
to this transparent life, this "dull" life. Across the way,

to be inside a body is gray earth that constantly  
stops  
itself again.

White buildings stand tough next to gray water  
People go into meetings, you are here being perfect  
While I am there in gray earth

Stopping

The bright stoppage

The single frame

The zoo shows itself to loving children

Across the country students open their lockers in open  
air courtyards. I am in love in springtime, with the movement  
of myself, and it's been so long. A rope that's wrong.

My body is broken, breaking in a symmetric two.