

Drift ice

The shining mist already outlines shadows.
We pull up the water right to our chins
like sheets, so ripplingly cool and fresh-starched,
we come to be bedded together, forever entwined
in the gauze of times past, when peacefully
no word we gave to what binds us, sleep
of unmoored reason, towards dreamed-up monsters.

Beside the Nile

No entrance with flourishes needed to occur.
Of a vanishing point no one knew. Everything just
swiftly got smaller in the calmly spread-out realm

of humbleness and indolence; a sky as
dull and light as ash seemed to submit itself,
its hallowing was a veil, approached

the distant mountain ridge which, staying put,
returned to desert. Almost a mercy
to stand still there or to move as silently,

your skirts held high above your head, dwelling
in one's shadow beside the Nile. Was it already sand
from the far side? You seemed never to have arrived,

no world behind you, from way back surrounded
by a changing just as unchanging as uncertain –
powder of grains, fall of light, breath

of evening wind. In the ensuing, river bed
full of absent paths, here was simply a place
where even time was allowed to disperse

and what lived there achieved itself without impatience.

Solitary funeral

All those rats rummaging away among the apples.
Over my hillocks and their poor slopes soused in
emerald goo not to be wiped off so Vero-

nesian and here there everywhere hellbows quivered,
blessful arches got soaked and ranks of pastor-
als turned their backlooks on others' suffering.

Messed ungood from reeking brush, this glue
'gainst huddled loin – mine. How can I
hate the mice when I have loved the rats,

Drenched with arrows. See, so high-born
one still hits at bitter end the fleece
of gold and the soft curls, smothered.

Away

In the dog days the frantic singing dies down.
At the dip in the grass the blackbird has come for a drink
four drawn-out draughts before it flew off –
what lives, lives by trembling and fear.

I know someone; he lies in his green grave,
it is still fresh. Silent there
like the shy bird he always was.

I too have never been so quiet before.
There is frighteningly little to fear.

The summer profuse, the warm earth
a resting-place where everywhere
shadows seem to grow out of a radiant sun.

'I love the Red of The Jewish Bride'

... I finger over the embroidery work, the chaste
blushing I adore, timidly rustling
the red garments like near-dead vine leaves
round her, a manger is she my oat bin,
my brazier of sugaring, the sweet-talking stalwart,
a shrub of fragility, I have laid my hand on
this bun – the nosegay, roses of her flushed
cheeks, she is the naked fruit bared to me,
brushwood of the devoted, wonderful unfolding
in courtly inclination, oh pious ruskie,
butter patter, flame of dreamy repose and
rosy hands, cream-dozy whiteness hiding
under incarnate corn-sheaf of the peerless
bride, and I golden man love solely this
one day forfeited to death, this shimmering dove.

The latter day

Earth is the ceiling, full of pale groping
shoots. After all we had landed up under
the grass, to be consumed by passion.

Hear how on high great choirs give sudden joyful tongue!
With phantom fingers stop up my ears: who
can have tidings for us, who are slowly

and secretly dissolving into soil, stroking senses
of the deepest substance? We will rise again
as bedrock, as a sea, a stray dog

or a wild onion. Or as a sun
that, bleeding, rending all curtains of being
sets up there.

The happy ending

What on earth are we doing here, we do not
ask ourselves as long as the jiggling of tunes
keeps coming from the speaker cabinets, hanging
invisible in the trees, and we go on thinking
that it's birds there twittering away –

What are we doing here? Just feel first if
our feet are warm enough and their knobbls
bearably painful, then take a good listen
to the gentle bubbling in the deep recesses of
our gut, old soothsayer that lets us know

if we're once more dying of hunger if not
thirst, there's no way of knowing otherwise
and please let it not go awry in the
here, the silting up, the woody sand-drift
where the lemonade stalls one after the other

appear to be mirages, if, panting, you thought
you were there – in the here where you walk and,
since you constantly cannot refrain from once more
looking back to see where you have come from,
keep on stumbling over tree stumps,

getting grazed by the rough bark of oaks
and scratched by rust- or blood-red barbed wire,
remains of civilisation. And the more you turn
your head, slogging on, at the magnificent
sunrise motionless at your back above the distant

trees that rustle inaudibly, the more you
know: that waking with the freshness of Tahitian limes,
that paradise-like first bite of tropical
delight in a covering of milk chocolate –
the blindingly pristine does not return.

What are we doing here? What we are not doing
is taking heed. Or is the abyss invisible, or
is there no abyss until you fall into it,
shoot along a smooth rock wall? It happens
swiftly. In the grass by the stream at the bottom

God waits, cheerful as a mother who all that
time has stayed at home, with a bowl of peanuts,
sherry in the glass. And from beyond the flowering
trees, at last there they come, the missing ones
for whom you unmissable, whom you could not bear to miss.

Beethoven on the Beaufort scale

sea like a mirror
scaly ripples, no
foam –

small wavelets, do not
break, crests have glassy appearance –
small waves, crests begin
to break, scattered
foam –

small waves becoming
larger, fairly frequent
foam crests –

moderate waves of pronounced
longer form, many
foam crests –

larger waves, breaking crests, cause
white crests of everywhere to be blown
into froth –
taller waves, white
foam –
of breaking crests along the direction of the wind

moderately high waves, crests of
waves form spindrift, well-marked
streaks of foam –
high waves, dense
streaks of foam –

along the direction of the wind, roller-forming, driving
foam –
very high waves with tumbling
wave-crests, sea takes on a
white appearance due to foam

exceptionally high waves, sea covered with
foam –
visibility strongly
reduced

air filled with foam
and driving
spray
sea completely
white

due to foam, practically
no visibility –

Bare mountain

Young life's sweet-smelling - daisies, meadows
and vanilla custard. The dishwasher of emotionality

cradles costly parcels, lukewarm sloshed.
Clean they become and beyond comparison much later,

sandblasted by time whipped up to a storm. 'Death's
the sublime, the only thing within reach

of all.' As long as you feel the blowing you've not been
mown away. How long and burdensome the roaming

to the top: a weather report that too of sorts.
In bloody prosperity harvesting elsewhere is swift,

juicy spring grass is siloed for winter.
A blessing, to be still able to proceed on weary feet

to the land where no lemons blossom
and the wind will lie as the loved one that you sought.

To God

God almighty, I'd be well shot of you.
I love you not, nor do I love the word,
the now made flesh, well-kneaded, tender-simmered
meatball of fair poetry. All that would claim to truth
and fain be worshipped I'll refute

until my tongue be parched. For I'm a wordwright,
I work holes and fissures tight, hammer bulkheads
against fate's lightning strikes, sink nails
where your thunder threatens, and curse the wiles
of the deadly serpent that you send, oh God.

I shall stand there, face to face
when your dark mirror breaks; but as David
with his slingstone. As long as I last I'll protect
my heart, the shaky stronghold at the ravine you are
so wondrously creating – by scoops of your hand.

I mark off world, resist all higher power
and thieving urge: you filch the dear lives constantly
of all those dear to me and those with whom I like to share
the rage at leaving, the taste of which you've put
way back in the first kiss – your death, your ash, your soot.

Rosie's oration

Ever seen a wrinkled sea-gull? Wrinkly sea, yes, stone
and bone, but walled-eye horse, hollow-gob donkey
no. Well, help each other keep peepers skinned! Fair to assume

humanity exists as species? Not as yet satisfactorily demonstrated
by independent sources, it being much too intersubjectively
limited, with bulging eyes copiously magnifying vain dazzling

can never plainly be concluded – without one contribution
of potencies dormant in wintering sugar beet as well as
the industrially freeze-dried tea rose – that dubious parasite,

conceitedly believing its own word, has the right to posit itself.
Well now, it unmistakably would seem related to the rose: it too
becoming crumpled in its utmost state, and shedding

sweet tears even, before the final snap. Likewise geranium and jasmine.
In short, QED: humanity, no, merely an overwhelming
quantity, falling outside all botanical categories, consequently

rushing around in panic, bellicose, in earliest
and final stages abusively not clinging to the illusory
public spirit, sweetly vegetating as seen fit, specimens.

Garden

All the branches and of those there are many
rock gently from birds only just flown away.
Now that the birds were invisible
you call this wind, but no proof
is forthcoming. The motion caused
remains the same: highly variable.
Invisible birds
can just as well be monkeys as wind –
feather-light monkeys, winged most likely
or bodiless.

Heathland joys

Don't forget the bowl for the hand-wash
to be frigged around in the list. How else can we
get all those glands dried? Squeeze!

To staunch all that woe of naval heroes,
to get swabs (oh kissers, ah phizzes) back on
track. The loins, as known for centuries,

end in a slack undercurl, landlousy.
That's why we stand shaking like heathens,
Belting each other left and right round the thighs

with hard facts: a course in fruit-
flesh marking on this ash-grey terrain will
from the very start make us crushedly crawl

off the cuff sappy brood, unless permanently
fixed the pouting suds, bashful nosegay of
seafood, are kept a beady eye on

by our plainspoken, well-earned sod hut.