

RAIN AND MOONLIGHT

The summer night will soon pale into morning;
As yet no trace of light invades the skies.
Only the rain's small voice before the dawning
That at my open window sighs.

Though bed was sought to ease life's long chastising
By one who longs for sleep when earth confines,
I seem to feel a lighter joy arising
Because the moon so brightly shines.

Oh restlessness on days when sun is hateful,
Oh roads on which one suffers dust's fierce bite,
Who after lethargy and fear would not feel grateful
At such a perfect light?

All that I have withheld while life was calling,
A yearning without form and without name,
Has now turned into warm rain that is falling
Outside a silver pane.

LATER LIFE

Wood for the fire, a book, a glass of wine:
These are what later life has kept in store,
Which never fail the one now lonely, for
They always are at hand and ne'er decline.

It might seem little, reeling in the skein
That one's life has described, one can but find
A single solace for the striving mind:
That there will come an end to all this pain.

Perhaps. Perhaps this though is what's most real:
Days quite identical that gauze would wind
Round what will heal, though not completely heal.

The clouds are driven by the selfsame sky.
The selfsame water streams. The selfsame wind
Around the lone one makes the selfsame cry.

NOVEMBER

It's raining and it is November:
Autumn lays siege now to the heart
That sadly, though more wont than ever,
Endures its secret pains apart.

And in the room, where resignation
Sees daily life pass as it may,
From streets that speak of desolation
A bleak light falls at close of day.

The years pass by but never alter,
The difference will soon be gone
Between dim memories that falter
And what is lived and is to come.

Lost are the ways I knew of gaining
Release from time in earlier days;
Always November, always raining,
Always this empty heart, always.

THE DAPPERSTRAAT

Nature is for the blank or satisfied.
And then: what can we boast of naturewise?
A stretch of woodland, postage stamp in size,
A hill with some small houses on the side.

Give me the town roads with their greyish cast,
The harbour quays of interlocking stone
The clouds whose beauty cannot be outdone
When, skylight-framed, they all go drifting past.

Everything's much if much is not expected.
Life hides its miracles till, without warning,
They're suddenly displayed in all their art.

This on my own I thought I had detected,
Rain-sodden, on a drab and drizzly morning,
Just downright happy, in the Dapperstraat.

THE STOIC

The window open, I give autumn passage -
The inexpressible, that as of old
And still the same. My one desire, all told,
Is this: to always love its message.

This life held little to be won in store.
It does not matter now. Defence is vain
If one considers all the world-old pain
Of countless billions who have gone before.

Youth is all restlessness and a bemused
Yearning to have loved ones time cannot best -
And loneliness a source of loss, a curse.

All that is past, and life is almost used.
In solitude the heart can now find rest.
And then: one's life could well have been much worse.

SPRING

Through desolate spring skies the sun broke clear.
A flight of birds dropped in a sudden sheer.
The thinly sown snow melted on the earth.
Heart, you are free: you had no grounds for fear.

BREATHING

Finding itself alone beneath the gleaming
Of autumn stars that glitter high above
A world grown calm, the heart can now approve:
There's little more to life on earth than breathing.

But that is: in this vale's depths to coerce
Into one's self a space immensely greater,
And then, one shared unsteady moment later,
Return it to the plundered universe.