

The Poetry Reader

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Bring life and living, untidiness and order,
Carbuncles and pearls, dark half-closed doors,
To image, metaphor; lingual calm; a grammar's
Entity, whose first act lifts the id into super self.

Let burnished, blazing power renew dim faces;
Fire those memories that keep you standing. Nerves
Power roots tingling sap, as discourse smoothes
Its rough moments into damask; filigree syllables.

You know, afresh, why in the very beginning there
Was the Word. So move in the flow, the curving tide,
The drift and wash. So primed for another verbal icon,
While by the waters of the Seine, more poems gather.

I read them; they read me.

March, 2012

Words For the Day

Each morning has its words. They awake
With lotus-blended waters, ritually sprinkled
Before our door. A pure start; sotto voce, these;
Companions in proper spirit, style. Neat, clean
Metaphors of the day to lift my sentences.

I chose best colours to enrich this minute,
Mood and thought to sooth perception's doors.
Let what is to be said find a sober tongue
Intent on clarity, decorum. Follow Webster's
Grammar. Let there be no ambiguity. None.

Narrow are the ways to Heaven, is my reminder.
What will the world be at nine, or after lunch?
You words, compatriots for this morning, prepare.
Be fresh rather than habitual. Don't let me down,
I can't become upset. You are my only language.

Let the hour hold no semantic terror, no hiatus.
The news will include the bad again: suicide bombs,
47 H1N1; Stanley Ho is hopping mad. Poor man.
How the rich suffer. And there are persistent emails.
Let them all descend, cascade, whatever is to come.

My morning has made me ready. I have words.

23-25 March 2011, City University of Hong Kong

Words Loop Again

I count, denote, irritate, divide,
Denude towards diamond-cut bare meaning,
Properly rectified; steadied into unwavering,
Whose revelation, greater than disclosure,
Is necessary stripping to a fine simplicity:
The essential mind parrying down a word.

That done, again look serially at life: ambiguity,
Contradiction, notable variety; deception as when
Reporting on no fly zone: hit target, miss truth.
And E Taylor's much married life awaits a smithy
Whose forge and hammer are equal to any choice.

Then the Indian Ocean loomed, end to end,

Compelling: count, connote, build, negotiate,
Accrue layers of onion; crunchy, sweet, sharply
Pungent, spicy, stirring up synonyms, shades; find
Sufficiency to move on, and on, lucidly. Revive
The rose. Let the morning glory accept fitful
Embrace of compatriot languages, then drive
Esemplastic best towards World Englishes,
That way ahead, that rooting, globalising bend.
Articulation is never done.

Meanwhile

Your metaphors and mine are personal,
Yet tribal, deep in history and intent.
We connect, multiply, expand.
Click our vocab to refresh, remind, add, tease
Slide, overlap, exchange, collide, collude, merge
Modify. That done, my words have kinsmen,
Reach out to you and yours, equally risen from
Journeys keying theme, thought, poem.

This is where we start.
I still try.

24-26 March 2011, City University of Hong Kong

David - 2

(for Jonathan Webster)

With shepherd-stealth astutely tempered by the blunt
 History of his pain, David and volunteer Abishai
 Sought and found, for the second, terrible time,
 Their King, asleep. Saul's dedicated, jealous anger
 Still fermented, still heaved and prowled. But David's
 Deeply rooted faith chose to see the Lord's anointed,
 Not the royal discontent, the turbulent hunter of his life,
 Who gave, without intent, point and precision
 To his hardy band, to their fugitive wanderings
 Among hill and cave, and longish Ein-Gedi nights.

Thus delivered, Saul lay fragile, exhausted,
 Sealed in quiet, his spear neatly pushed into
 The ground by his bolster. Saul the grievous, great
 Flawed instrument; restless victim of disobedience,
 Rampaging wilfulness. Who so needed music, loved
 Courage, monumental anger; adrenalin for tribal nation.
 Who was moved by majesty, pride, quick remorse.
 Who remembered the quarrelsome words of Samuel,
 That thorn, that nuisance of a judge turned prophet.

... let me smite him, I pray thee....

... the Lord himself will strike.... And they left,
 Taking the mighty spear, whose sharp whistle had
 Shaved the air before, just missing him as he sat
 Composing psalms. And the cruse of water, life.
 Leaving the camp... the chance to cure, so simply,
 Their exile in the uncertain, bitter south... they
 Walked between trenches of enemies divinely
 Tranquilized.

So ensued some necessary prophesies
 To fill their days... sparing some metaphors for us.

... and they gat them away, and no man saw it...

Darting nimbly as they climbed, held their breath,
 Checked the drift of stars, the needling angle
 Of the wind as it shifted across gullies, pushing
 Patches of mist up the slopes. Pain and joy rippled

In their hearts. Kept from discovery, certain death
By the Lord whose other hand dispensed the dew
Of sleep on Saul's army, they gained the distant
High space of a neighbouring hill, where sad David
Called down to Abner, Saul's bravest of the brave...

ye are worthy to die... ye have not kept your master...

Heard and spoke to Saul and then departed.

Dry Bones

Here the Sun's hot rays decree again a
Purgatorial valley sequestering remnants,
Heaped like shards, as if they never lived,
Or lifted eyes of pledging to the Lord
Their heart's first waking beat. Instead
These disarranged, sad-mute generations.
No order, no touch of angelic wings
Marked their passing. Only emptying.

I saw the Shekina in all glory leave
The Temple, rise to Mt of Olives. God
Who dwells absolute, perfect essence,
Comforter, radiance, forgiving presence,
Whose love we strive against ourselves,
In gain and keep, judged, left us exiled
In the land he gave our faithful Fathers.
We sinned within corroding sin.

Lord you raised your hand, called out Son
Of Man, leading me, Ezekiel, back to forth
That great soaring vision: a nation's bleached
Resolve. I don't tremble. No. You punish
Out of love. But surely unruly endgamers
Had faces, joy, anger; care above self; good
Husbandry though self-maimed, gradually
Dead in a dying land. I am partly them,

Lord.

You re-arrange, exchange death for life:
*Behold, I will cause breath to enter you,
and ye shall live: And I will lay sinews
upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you,
and cover you with skin, and put breath
in you, and ye shall live; and ye
shall know that I am the Lord¹....*
A gathering future, waiting since before

¹ Ezekiel 37:5-6

The foundation of the world.

Across the valley skulls nod; jaws click.
Unknown, unlamented, my bones return.
Flesh of my flesh. See my skin grow tight
In sunlight. I gather, God, to our nation,
Forgiven in extremis; free of rot and fester.
We return; singing winds celebrate re-creation,
Beautiful beyond our praise, our dreaming,
Ever divine, out of love, not dust, not rib;

A second Genesis for the whole house Israel
Filled by the Holy Spirit. Restored, glorified,
A single kingdom, for the one Shepherd.
As two sticks unite. So be armed by love.
Follow the Lord's statutes and ordinances,
For he has brought us into his gifted land
Of milk and honey, sparkling waters, quiet green,
To thrive the wholeness of His purpose.

March 2011, City University of Hong Kong