

SANDRO PECCHIARI

SELECTED POETRY

KIDHOOD

I.

We sucked from udders,
hiding friendship in the cowsheds
wearing it like drops of white mulberries
on our lips, not showing off.

The river at the wind was our fence,
the fence a border
to foreign kids and fights -

at times we crossed at fords to barter
for long reeds or fish,
lending our own world
borrowing words or weapons.

Ditches dug around our houses,
doubled summer
huge unending clouds -
our wilderness drowned in buckets
of sun-warmed water
- left out all afternoon -
to wash away our mud,
to wash us back
into a world of order.

2.

our questions hushed
into days of mallow buds and berries:
the world was food for us.

our time spurred a new language of nettles,
against our skins
scattered scraps of words
open-hand sore pricking

cicadas spoke for us.

3.

Heal me - you shouted
in the battlecore
hay like bombs
girls nibbling at pumpkin seeds
cheering

Handwoven baskets for our helmets
brooms our rifles,
we boys were blundering hushed fightings
aiming and shooting with no sound
- the ban was strict, we had been told -
miming motionless running for our lives,
battlecries and death rattles.
The cows - unaltered - stared
and munched.

I thumbed a line along your imaginary wound,
wondering if it would work,
you jumped back into the battle, healed -
an instant miracle stable boy.

Heal me -
I could not heal myself from you...
Where are you now
fifty years on?
I could recognize you
only in my memories,
not on these streets
paved
these cornfields a parkade.

4.

I could
never trace the blue thin air of our past days
nor you -
some said dead, some said gone,
not a word sometimes -
answers like walls to me,
a *don't ask* slapped on my face.

You wrapped me where I hurt
wound your way through me,
stung my heart.
Wide-open over the other
- sap smelled of life-to-come -
we twig-stitched bush leaves
into crowns and trains around each other
walking our paths of days.

Those were our brittle toys of power.

Kings of the hamlet
- or queens -
we didn't know our hearts,
we knew our hands
and lips.

5.

It was years of silence
in the streets, in rooms:
a long-before-technology countryside
of gravel roads and puddles
few street-lamps and sturdy stars

as I resavour that gone-lost feeling of the dusk
like palms on my face
cows mooing their way back home
like thoughts in candlelight;
the cuckoo clock ticking our emptiness in the parlour;
we, unhomed by postwar,
opening cans of tuna
plucking a turkey
with no words.

6.

They never spoke of the years before -
I was still small, they wouldn't tell me,
sandpaper blood thickened the hidden years
barbed wire looped their skin
ashes looked like snow blinding
medals brought back home, a flag, but not men.

so now our rotation axis was of orchards
eggs hidden in the hay, glossy formica kitchen tables,
Walt Disney, rosaries in the fresh shadow of the understairs
with spiders.

The waving bluish TV screen
a spaceship limelight
in the village bar was unreachable.
The house was firmly bolted.

My friends released me from all this:
their harsh dialect of wild smells tore open
the blank unknown maps of tongues
running to some love, unripened.

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7.

prisoners of war sharing cherries
in a life of curfews.

My grandma flinched
at my quick learning of the lingo
annoyed -
the face of one who's bound to polish all the silverware
and doesn't want to.

But that was my only shining weapon
for this world
that spurted like a planet of grazed knees,
of new bodies clinging like grapevine-tendrils,
of ancient consonants disappearing,
dismantled conjugations:
they listened half amused half horrified
but they did listen.

I tried with Christ
he would not.

8.

my unwearied childhood
is backing all my shadows into life
what I tracked deep in your eyes
was the bluenight of your naming things.

I never listened to my voice
but I remember yours:
you lead me to stones and moss
and white caps of waves.
I would follow those trails of yours
winding off next to me
sailing in my mind
far from yourself.

I learned so much
from your going away.

SELECTED POETRY

9.

we rolled pebbles of words
and plans of sandstone
- hands like seams -
then sand again

we were the moments bodies lap the shore
dropping dreams.

you quenched my thirst
showing me the far place that was called home.

10.

So strong was the longing
for this archaeological excavation
inside my mind
that I droned back:
my lands are under highroads now,
under supermarket strollers stuffed with kids,
recycle signs...where do I dump myself?

traffic is a ribbon flowing - the river too
the bridges witness
and you
in your scatterbrained love
choosing pell-mell ways.

what is this land now?

II.

this must be unreal:
a time-bubble swelling swelling
until a joy a pain will sprout
this feeling that we're living.
What has been planned elsewhere
is somebody's experiment
emptying our time of time
whitewashing lives.
We have been disappearing from this screen -
a stolen plane, a pair of bat wings.
We ended up untuned.
I don't believe this.

12.

we are accustomed to miles and miles
places sprout from driving - long and straight
mainly thru rolling crumbling horizons
chewed by wheels

the sun is there the moon is there a still landscape rolling a straight
road
is this your life slightly moving the wheel in your automatic car?

imagine extinguishing a cigarette butt on your forearm
make you swerve curse yell at me slap me whatever what the hell?
just to leave a mark so you'll remember.

I will not do this of course but I am talking to you about
this feeling in my dreams
you squint your eyes - a little movement to grasp
the road is there the landscape
and suns and moons
you look at me and hug and lap my face
this is the way this is the way
home

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13.

time to round up the wagons of a real “being there”
rounding up with what we are deep down.

Sounds are men, they live through times,
resound and make us proud
of being in unison sometimes.