

THE STRUCTURE OF RIME I

I ask the unyielding Sentence that shows Itself forth in the language as I make it,

Speak! For I name myself your master, who come to serve.
Writing is first a search in obedience.

There is a woman who resembles the sentence. She has a place in memory that moves language. Her voice comes across the waters from a shore I don't know to a shore I know, and is translated into words belonging to the poem:

*Have heart, the text reads,
you that were heartless.
Suffering joy or despair
you will suffer the sentence
a law of words moving
seeking their right period.*

I saw a snake-like beauty in the living changes of syntax.

*Wake up, she cried.
Jacob wrestled with Sleep—you who fall into Nothingness
and dread sleep.
He wrestled with Sleep like a man reading a strong
sentence.*

I will not take the actual world for granted, I said.

*Why not? she replied.
Do I not withhold the song of birds from you?
Do I not withhold the penetrations of red from you?
Do I not withhold the weight of mountains from you?
Do I not withhold the hearts of men from you?*

*I alone long for your demand.
I alone measure your desire.*

OFTEN I AM PERMITTED TO RETURN TO A MEADOW

as if it were a scene made-up by the mind,
that is not mine, but is a made place,

that is mine, it is so near to the heart,
an eternal pasture folded in all thought
so that there is a hall therein

that is a made place, created by light
wherefrom the shadows that are forms fall.

Wherefrom fall all architectures I am
I say are likenesses of the First Beloved
whose flowers are flames lit to the Lady.

She it is Queen Under The Hill
whose hosts are a disturbance of words within words
that is a field folded.

It is only a dream of the grass blowing
east against the source of the sun
in an hour before the sun's going down

whose secret we see in a children's game
of ring a round of roses told.

Oftentimes I am permitted to return to a meadow
as if it were a given property of the mind
that certain bounds hold against chaos,

that is a place of first permission,
everlasting omen of what is.

THE LAW I LOVE IS MAJOR MOVER

from which flow destructions of the Constitution.

No nation stands unstirrd

in whose courts. *I, Jobn, testify:*
I scaw. But he who judges must

know mercy

as a man knows a woman

in marriage,

for She is fair, whom we, masters, serve.

The Which, says John Adams,

“requires the continual exercise of virtue

“beyond the reach

“of human infirmity, even in its best estate.”

Responsibility is to keep

the ability to respond.

The myriad of spiders' eyes that Rexroth saw

reflecting light

are glamorless, are testimony

clear and true.

The shaman sends himself

The universe is filld with eyes then, intensities,

with intent,

outflowings of good or evil,

benemaledictions of the dead,

but

the witness brings self up before the Law.

It is the Law before the witness that

makes Justice.

There is no touch that is not each

to each reciprocal.

The scale of five, eight, or twelve tones

performs a judgment

previous to music. The music restores

health to the land.

The land? The Boyg
in Peer Gynt speaks.

On the stage it was shown: a moving obscurity.

I try to read you, lad, who offer no text.

Not terror now, dumb grief it is,

diabolus — but little devils

are garbled men that speak garble.

Your chosen place is less than hell,

nor hate nor love breeds. There,

disorder is not, order is not, not no

even simpleton need demands my ear.

Hear!

Hear! Beautiful damnd man that lays down his law lays down
himself creates hell

a sentence unfolding healthy heaven.

Thou wilt not allow the suns to move

nor man to mean desire move,

nor rage for war and wine,

here where the mind nibbles,

nor embrace the law under which you lie,

that will not fall upon your face

or upon knees, all

but twisted out of shape, crippled

by angelic Syntax.

Look! the Angel that made a man of Jacob

made Israël in His embrace

was the Law, was Syntax.

Him I love is major mover.

YES, AS A LOOK SPRINGS TO ITS FACE

a life colors the meadow.
"This is the place," Abraham said.
The field and the cave therein arose,
even that lies hid in everything,
where nothing was, comes before his eyes
so that he sees and sings
central threnodies, as if a life had
but one joyous thread, one wife, one
meeting ground, and fibre of that thread
a sadness that from that moment
into that moment led.

Poems come up from a ground so
to illustrate the ground, approximate
a lingering of eternal image, a need
known only in its being found ready.

The force that words obey in song
the rose and aruchoke obey
in their unfolding towards their form.
— But he wept, and what grief?

had that flowering of a face touchd
that may be after struggle
a song as natural as a glance
that came so upon joy as if this were the place?

It returns. He cannot return. He sends
a line out, of yearning, that might be
in movement of music seen once in a face
reference to a melody heard in passing.

striving against (within) down-rushtet of the river,
 a call we heard and answer
 in the lateness of the world
 primordial bellowings
 from which the youngest world might spring,
 salmon not in the well where the
 hazelnut falls
 but at the falls battling, inarticulate,
 blindly making it.

This is one picture apt for the mind.

A second: a moose painted by Stubbs,
 where last year's extravagant antlers
 lie on the ground.
 The forlorn moosey-faced poem wears
 new antler-buds,
 the same,

"a little heavy, a little contrived",

his only beauty to be
 all moose.

A POEM BEGINNING WITH A LINE BY PINDAR

I

The light foot hears you and the brightness begins
 god-step at the margins of thought,
 quick adulterous tread at the heart.
 Who is it that goes there?

Where I see your quick face
 notes of an old music pace the air,
 torso-reverberations of a Grecian lyre.

In Goya's canvas Cupid and Psyche
 have a hurt voluptuous grace
 bruised by redemption. The copper light
 falling upon the brown boy's slight body

is carnal fate that sends the soul wailing
 up from blind innocence, ensnared
 by dimness
 into the deprivations of desiring sight.

But the eyes in Goya's painting are soft,
 diffuse with rapture absorb the flame.
 Their bodies yield out of strength.

Waves of visual pleasure
 wrap them in a sorrow previous to their impatience.

A bronze of yearning, a rose that burns
 the tips of their bodies, lips,
 ends of fingers, nipples. He is not winged.
 His thighs are flesh, are clouds
 lit by the sun in its going down,
 hot luminescence at the loins of the visible.

But they are not in a landscape.
 They exist in an obscurity.

The wind spreading the sail serves them.
 The two jealous sisters eager for her ruin
 serve them.

That she is ignorant, ignorant of what Love will be,
 serves them.

The dark serves them.
 The oil scalding his shoulder serves them,
 serves their story. Fate, spinning,
 knots the threads for Love.

Jealousy, ignorance, the hurt . . . serve them.

II

This is magic. It is passionate dispersion.
 What if they grow old? The gods
 would not allow it.

Psyche is preserved.

In time we see a tragedy, a loss of beauty
 the glittering youth
 of the god retains—but from this threshold
 it is age
 that is beautiful. It is toward the old poets
 we go, to their faltering,
 their unaltering wrongness that has style,
 their variable truth,
 the old faces,
 words shed like tears from
 a plenitude of powers time stores.

A stroke. These little strokes. A chill.

The old man, feeble, does not recoil.
 Recall. A phase so minute,
 only a part of the word in- jerrd.

The Thundermakers descend,

damergering a nuv. A nerb.

The present dented of the U
 nighted stayd. States. The heavy clod?
 Cloud. Invades the brain. What
 if lilacs last in *this* dooryard bloomd?

Hoover, Roosevelt, Truman, Eisenhower—
 where among these did the power reside
 that moves the heart? What flower of the nation
 bride-sweet broke to the whole rapture?
 Hoover, Coolidge, Harding, Wilson
 hear the factories of human misery turning out commodities.
 For whom are the holy matins of the heart ringing?
 Noble men in the quiet of morning hear
 Indians singing the continent's violent requiem.
 Harding, Wilson, Taft, Roosevelt,
 idiots fumbling at the bride's door,
 hear the cries of men in meaningless debt and war.
 Where among these did the spirit reside
 that restores the land to productive order?
 McKinley, Cleveland, Harrison, Arthur,

Garfield, Hayes, Grant, Johnson,
 dwell in the roots of the heart's rancor.
 How sad "amid lanes and through old woods"
 echoes Whitman's love for Lincoln!

There is no continuity then. Only a few
 posts of the good remain. I too
 that am a nation sustain the damage
 where smokes of continual ravage
 obscure the flame.

It is across great scars of wrong
 I reach toward the song of kindred men
 and strike again the naked string
 old Whitman sang from. Glorious mistake!
 that cried:

"The theme is creative and has vista."
 "He is the president of regulation."

I see always the under side turning,
 fumes that injure the tender landscape.
 From which up break
 lilac blossoms of courage in daily act
 striving to meet a natural measure.

III (for Charles Olson)

| | | | | | |
|-------|--------|---------|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------------|
| wheat | barley | oats | poppy | coriander | Psyche's tasks—the sorting of seeds |
| amise | beans | lentils | peas | —every grain | |
| | | | in its right place | before nightfall; | |

gathering the gold wool from the cannibal sheep
 (for the soul must weep
 and come near upon death);

harrowing Hell for a casket Proserpina keeps
 that must not
 be opened . . . containing beauty?
 no! Melancholy could like a serpent

that is deadly sleep

we are not permitted

to succumb to.

These are the old tasks.

You've heard them before.

They must be impossible. Psyche
must despair, be brought to her

insect instructor;

must obey the counsels of the green reed;

saved from suicide by a tower speaking,

must follow to the letter

freakish instructions.

In the story the ants help. The old man at Pisa
mixd in whose mind

(to draw the sorts) are all seeds

as a lone ant from a broken ant-hill

had part restored by an insect, was

upheld by a lizard

(to draw the sorts)

the wind is part of the process

defines a nation of the wind—

father of many notions,

Who?

let the light into the dark? began

the many movements of the passion?

West

from east men push.

The islands are blessed

(cursed) that swim below the sun,

man upon whom the sun has gone down!

There is the hero who struggles east

widdershins to free the dawn and must

woo Night's daughter,
sorcery, black passionate rage, covetous queens,
so that the fleecy sun go back from Troy,

Colchis, India . . . all the blazing armies
spent, he must struggle alone toward the pyres of Day.

The light that is Love
rushes on toward passion. It verges upon dark.

Roses and blood flood the clouds.

Solitary first riders advance into legend.

This land, where I stand, was all legend
in my grandfathers' time: cattle raiders,
animal tribes, priests, gold.

It was the West. Its vistas painters saw
in diffuse light, in melancholy,

in abysses left by glaciers as if they had been the sun
primordial carving empty enormities
out of the rock.

Snakes lurkd

guarding secrets. Those first ones
survived solitude.

Scientia

holding the lamp, driven by doubt;

Eros naked in foreknowledge

smiling in his sleep; and the light

spilled, burning his shoulder—the outrage
that conquers legend—

passion, dismay, longing, search

flooding up where

the Beloved is lost. Psyche travels

life after life, my life, station

after station,

to be tried

without break, without

news, knowing only—but what did she know?

The oracle at Miletus had spoken

then the virgin flower of the dark falls back flesh of our flesh
from which everywhere . . .

the information flows

that is yearning. A line of Pindar
moves from the area of my lamp
toward morning.

In the dawn that is nowhere

I have seen the willful children

clockwise and counter-clockwise turning.

THE STRUCTURE OF RIME XI

There are memories everywhere then. Rememberd, we go out, as in
the first poem, upon the sea at night—to the drifting.

Of my first lover there is a boat drifting. The oars have been cast down
into the shell. As if this were no water but a wall, there is a repeated
knock as of hollow against hollow, wood against wood. Stooping to knock
on wood against the traps of the nightfishers, I hear before my knocking
the sound of a knock drifting.

It goes without will thru the perilous sound, a white sad wanderer
where I no longer am. It taps at the posts of the deserted wharf.

Now from the last years of my life I hear forerunners of a branch
creaking.

All night a boat swings as if to sink. Weight returning to weight in the
cold water. A hotel room returns from Wilmington into morning. A boat
sets out without boatmen into twenty years of snow returning.

THE STRUCTURE OF RIME XIII

Best of ways. That there be a law the Earth gives and the Mountain
stand over us, the Valley haunt us, the Shores between elements draw us.

Where is thy Jerusalem? Where is Chou perfected? land at the center? So
that the stars arrange, named, into guardian orders.

The structure of rime is in the rigorous trees repeated that take on the
swirl visible of the coast winds and the outcroppings, the upraised and
bared granites that define sentences of force and instrument.

For the melted Earth has gone up out of the Sun into a law that is of
stone. And light melodies of the sun—beauty that has shadows, great
rests of dark-cast caverns in the living—play thereon.

For the first law, the stone tables of Moses or of Kung, are instruments of
a light music, a melody from celestial orbs outswirl.

Aldebaran, El Nath, and the Raining Ones, the Pleiades, in the east,
above the dark mountain. Eye, Horn and Heart of the Bull emerging.

And south, Lord over the dark water, the Scorpion entire, that from
baleful Antares upreaches into the Scales of the Law. The rage of the
heart ravishing or raising up. For the claws of the heart's bale are two
points of the beam in Libra. For in french the fléau is a flail from which
the scales hang that balance the soul created and its creation.

Best of ways. That there be a law under the stars. For the galaxies
drift outward to enter a new universe.

That there be, where we are, a law. And, seeing the mountain, the stream
defining the valley, the old sea, we say *This*

is the place.

tho once I saw — Did I stare
into the heart of desire burning
and see a radiant man? like those
fancy cities from fire into fire falling?

We are close enough to childhood, so easily purged
of whatever we thought we were to be,
flamey threads of firstness go out from your touch.

Flickers of unlikely heat
at the edge of our belief bud forth.