

SONGS AT TWILIGHT

Reflections gathered on the occasion of Vannuzzo's passing

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The Reunion of Soul and Body
William Blake

VANNUZZO

*Hai conosciuto l'amore in questa vita.
Quest'e una cosa grande e meravigliosa
Hai conosciuto l'amore in questa vita
Ed anche dopo la morte.
Quest'e una cosa grande e misteriosa.*

Mother love has brightened
In the time since she left,
Brightened by the light that ever plays
In that jewelled mansion.
It now enlivens your gathering form.

The fine and fading currents within
And the rising flaring torrents without
Shine through all that we know,
All that we do not know.

Savour the soft fires for now my father, my friend.
Your horse champs.
It now approaches.

NEWLY DEPARTED
Thoughts for a Young Friend

When in the crack and rumble of electric space
Try to remember what you've left behind.
We have long known that no man can by taking thought
Add a cubit to his stature.
But of length of days, who can say.

When you awaken within the cracks and spaces of broken time
Look to the bright currents that ripple and run.
No maps here
Just everything you have ever been
And all unrealised that awaits fulfilment.

When stilled of breath and chilled in bone
Regather all the light you ever knew
And charge your form for swifter travel.
Strong wind kindles. Bright night beckons.
Which will you choose?

When the bright rain sparks around you
Hits and cricks and spats around you,
When the dark of night before you
Fracts and frames spendoured geometries,
When with swift thought
All distance is annulled, all time stilled,

Then you will know that you have arrived.

JUST MAN

My father was fearless.
When sent through strafe of flashing bullet
Flesh-flaying crash of mortar and metal
He carried his message well.

He knew the ropes,
He knew the whips
And the slash of hissing blade.

His aging frame now buckles,
Enfrailed, it fails, near useless to this world.
Yet it holds a barely tethered wrath
That seethes at all injustice.

Hold hard my strong good man,
Lest this storm of rain and ruin
That steels and lashes earth
Too deep cuts the tender lines
That hold it all together.

You may be old, but you still hold
Your wild and youthful ways.
The sharp thrust of anger
Can cut deeper than any steel.

The grieving, the groaning,
The pointless lashings that stung your young body
Gave to your eyes a fire that could burn cities.

No man-made fire this
Blasts of mind can raze the future
As surely as flash of fiery metal.

Come soften now good man,
While yet the warm tide turns.

UNION

You can always find me at day's end
In the fusion of forms, profusion of faces
Flying and flowing in far-lofted clouds

As I ever find you in winding rivers
In curling murmur of glistening waves
In gentle whisper of wandering shoreline.

All time is here, in every moment,
Within all change and every movement,
In hard won silence born of deep stillness
Nightly recovered, nightly renewed.

Here together,
There together,
Above, below, between together
Forever.

NEW IMPERIUM

This is the wall of stony faces,
This is the plain of lost dry skulls.
How many slaughters does it take
Before we've had enough?
Careful now.

No spear, no arrow,
No shield or sabre close at hand.
The blast of cannon barely muted
As thunder of jet and whistle of missile
Shock and shake this careless time.
Careful now.

And who can recall
Those two small suns that flayed,
That ashed and slayed a people,
In that false triumph of cruel glory?
Careful now.

We are all too accustomed
To spin and slaughter,
To soft commands of deadly purpose,
To haughty laughter in high places,
To sobbing and wailing of broken mothers.
Careful now.

So let us look further,
Let us pause longer
Let us remember those far-off places
The hidden spaces, the welcoming faces
As night draws nigh.

Shape and shadow of glistening mountain,
Sibilant stream and falling fountain,
Whispering water, chilling wind,
Gold-streaked clouds at end of day
Remember these as night draws nigh.

HAIKU

I

Ghosts take many different forms.
They curl in smoke,
Morph in cloud,
Turn in stone.

II

It is when light
Comes out of your eyes
That you know that more is at work.

III

More than physics this.
More than matter here,
In the light shining through you.

IV

The ventings of the earth sigh faintly,
The songs of a cooling body.

SONG OF THE SUN

It's very bright on the surface of the sun,
Like mother gold, it's very bright.

Can you bear the surface of the sun?
Can you wear the surface of the sun?
Not in this body, that's for sure

When it shines through your pores,
Then you know the light of the Son.
We shine.
We shine like suns.

FRAGMENTS

I

We enter turning worlds
Through warm wet wombs of waiting mothers.
We birth again as surely into cold of night.

II

The power in our lives is better spent in the living.
But when the day is done, may we yet remain present
To meet the occasion with an opened eye.

THE CAVERN

Within this darkness
Dancing light lines the forms
Too distant to discern for now,
But fully present.

Man of iron sinew points the way.
Silent brother, robed and hooded
Looking on.

I turn the stone timewards
And am met by eyes
Softened of tears, softened of silence.
No face of death will rule in that time.

Marcasite glance, cobalt glow,
The finest of lines
Flow into your gathering form.

I found the strong man
Who looked with sadness upon a broken world.
He showed the stillness of soul, the lightness of heart,
The rapture of flight, the deeps of night.
I have long waited for this change.

The evening light now turns
To golden forms within the darker tones.
The cave alight again.
Man of iron sinew pointing still,
Ancient brother looking on.

SARIDA

Old mother lines pale reflected.
Body wasted under wafer thin skin
Hard harrowed gasp of wet breath in final time
Now replenished
Now restored.

NIGHTFALL

The blood you bled
Now shines through hidden wounds
In those who follow.
Light splinters to impossible fineness
Within this ensphered perfection.

Where will it be then?
That light gathered and formed
In slow breath rising,
Slow breath falling.
Where will it be then,
When breath is final stilled?

Gather now the rays while yet they shine
Hear now the songs while yet they sound
Become now strong, for the night will be long.

MERCURY

How will it be
When flesh is spent?
When caul of jewelled light
Draws us more strongly on
Than ever we knew
In promise rings and precious stones?

How will it be
When the faces of the beloved
And the faces of the despised
Arise and greet and flare around?

Our scarlet sins bleed slow from open wounds O Lord.
They fall hard upon the earth.

Yet through it all, we are drawn on
By the beauty of faint forms
And the soft fires of fixed earths
Gathered from flaming mountains.

CANZONA PER MARIULA

*E quante canzone silenziosi?
E quante lacrimi com' un fiume?*

Soft furrows down your cheeks,
Worn by countless tears
And years of constant sorrow.

Soft wet cheeks,
My dear gone mother.

*E quante canzone silenziosi?
E quante lacrimi com' un fiume?*

OF ART AND WATER
A Song for Bobby

My dear gone friend
Great lover of that sea
Into which slowly slipped
The ashen remains of your once-laughing frame.

At first, a solitary bird.
Then another.
A flock soon wheeled around that cloudy plume
Spreading beneath the circle of boards and bards
Gathered on furl and fall of Loutitt Bay.

We were all there for your return to mother-water.
The birds of the air swooped into the sea that day,
Carried you to your new home.

Your elements now curl through cold currents,
And you well-gone
Long-gone beyond containment.

TO A YOUNG FRIEND
For Jed

Smoke slipped slowly
Curling, outreaching, yearning
Then vanished.

How long does it take to learn
That raised voices do not necessarily rise to heaven?
We are all pierced by love
All crazed by death.

When cold and stilled in that white room,
No fire from heaven rained, but icy stones.
They lashed and thundered upon the high roof of that strange temple.
We fathers spoke then of the need to speak further.

This we have yet to do.

FAILING BREATH

When stilled and done of mortal breath
There will remain the wisp of smoke, the burst of light
The fragrance sweet, the dance of flame
The deeds of day, the dreams of night.
Look and listen while yet you may.

Journey on and live your days
In patient love, one with another.
Remember all that's been and done
And all that which has yet to come.

Mother love sustain through grace
This battered home, this broken place,
This body scarred, the air disturbed,
The damage wrought, the life perturbed.
Keep us close to you this day.

And we will find again the thread
And share the wine and break the bread,
And keep to heart the sacred vow
All through the night till morning come.