

DAYS OF LOUD SILENT WALLS

Days of loud silent walls
two out of four neon bulbs not working
a field of oranges, pale pinks and blues
no cases on the pillows, some loose feathers
bottles still left over from the party.
The constant noise of the walls.

Inertia not broken, suspense of inaction.
Loud smiles, routines not water for the eyes
So strong that one must have help.
I have help, friends taking time
concerned if hungry,
Even an accident becomes a story retold.
I never wondered as a child if reindeer can fly,
deer can spiral through the air
hit by my car.

Impulse
call again,
call, minimal response.
"I am making dinner"
Hold my hand from two hundred miles away.
"The only bright thing in my life."

If it is true?
If it is brightness?
If it is the only brightness?
If it is the only brightness in her life?
Why hug the shadow?

Pain, not quite indigestion.
Soaking my toe in a tub of hot water.
Flaying oneself? Only an ingrown toenail.
"Lecture"
Talk about myself as an artist.
Success - I wish he gets angry.
Can I read answers in eyes?
Two of them to each of them two.
Too poetic.

When does four times making love
leave one minus one - alone?

My own voice vying for attention
among walls hung with work.
Unable to work, or put away
a pair of socks.

Take a shower!
The walls only whisper.

BLACK DOG

Reliving times of old songs.
The meaning of which I didn't know
when first I heard them,
or heard them at all.

Friends of a year only
have lived with me from the start.
I have lived. I live with them now
as I did many years before I came to be

You are nineteen years old
I like the way you sit when you read
You like the way I wear my coat
You have not learned yet
how to make your eyes lie.

You give sounds to words
which by accident I wrote
You have created a being more complete
more real than any surviving son.
through you I begin to see myself.
I have confidence, I am complete
still shaking from your humanity.
You know how to cry.

Black dog of my dream
you are kind and strong.
My mind meant you no harm.

Big eyes, gentle sway of indecision.
I have taken a lot from you over the
past three years.
What have I given back to you?

So you are leaving your husband.
You would follow me to another place.
Why?
You followed before, can't you see
that you had to leave the road.

What can I give in return
for the things I demand out of you.
You are as lost as I,
but you are afraid to cry.
Aloud to spill your tears
someone might find you by hearing the noise.
I have heard you, I came, but selfishly
did not let you see me.

READY

Things baffle me.
All things become united.
People come forth when they can sense
you are ready.

Thanksgiving, two days early
they thank,. yet how much pain
is felt that I can't
empathize.
My brain exhausted
giving, even what I didn't know I was to give.
They had to take it all,
they can not select, they need.

I kiss my feet every time I leave them.
Thankful for their support of my being.

Is it time that some women would love
the boy with a crooked nose?
All it took
was for him to announce
that laughter and pain have to live.

READING

For the first time I have felt it.
The high and exhaustion.
Facing the people and reading
my words.
I was someone else speaking.
Compassion, joy and sadness.
Agreeing with the wise men
that the moon was much more
important.
How light are one's thoughts
when as a combination of letters
and marks, they are
firmly placed,
and spoken.
It was not the applause which
is joyous,
it is the hollow feeling of the head
the pulsing arms.
Each one, in their own privacy
I have reached.

POETRY

Like fat, rising to the top of the soup,
crappy verses rise from my brain.
The good part is
that I only have to cook once a week.
In the remaining days
I only reheat.

TO L. A. -T.

Where do you find the strength
to get up in the morning
Where do you find encouragement
when resignation absorbs it all.

Many times left,
yet remaining and returning
each day exhausted, helping others.
Let the bastards jump if they want!
Let them have headaches!
Or pick at their flesh.

I don't believe the words I have spoken.
I know them also.
And frankly, I would be upset a day or two
should any of them depart
Remembering them I would forget
since I have to remember to live

I finally understand how the sun
that shines so,
needs so much energy
to give off its' light.

ON MEETING

Was I afraid to let you near?
I must have been afraid to see your voice.
And let your eyes speak to me.
Scared that I might like what they were to say.

There and Here are intermingled again.
From the dialect of Yiddish you speak.
To live, your parents have chosen
The town that was mine long ago.

The depth of your gaze
remembers what your parents have seen.

You were born here in Peace,
your parents surviving the camps.
I was born there in War.
though tired and hungry, surviving.

And you have not asked even once.

And happy, my white chariot had taken me home
at slightly above legal speed.

TO LEE

Hugging me is the easy part.
Name or no name
I should tan your hide.
I am here, and will be should you reach out.

To reach me
you have to
stretch out your hand.

The one that gave you life,
the one that begot life with you,
and the ones that you have given life to,
are much closer.

Take the arm,
the hand which you have brought close to me.
Embrace the ones
that are closer to your heart.
This is the part which is very hard.

You have to tell your muscles to reach,
when all are brought close to your chest
you will not topple.
their feet add extra support.
A one legged table can not hold
even a salt shaker.

As for me?
I am only as far away
as the length of your arm.

CERTAINTY

Talking to you is something I cherish.
Sharing with you of my joys and my tears.
Listening to your life
with substance exploding
its' shrapnel embedded in my heart

and my brain.

Apologetic and fearful
my certainty lingers
hesitant to speak
to find out you're a dream.
A dream I am dreaming
in some other person awaking
to find your laughter
lingering here.

How hungry am I?
That I am eating of something,
a fruit from which knowledge
is wrestled by me.

How pregnant am I?
that a word of a color
can within seconds
be born and be free?

I am writing this letter
disjointed it seems,
If it's a dream I am living
then let it continue
while working awake
with the canvas and pen.
How strange are my questions
and confused are my thoughts.

LAST SUNDAY MORNING I CRIED

Last Sunday morning I cried.
On Saturday my hands stained with paint,
and in happiness gave birth
to colored surfaces and shapes.
Exploding in thought of creating,
overflowing, and sharing with friends.

Born and completed
no longer a challenge
with paint neatly varnished
it hung on the wall.
Awake in its glory
and saying contented
that a stroke of the brush
is needed no more.

Not able to close the doors of my mind,
I opened the Gates of the Forest.
What author is this, that is painting with pain?

What soul has been as much tormented
is guilt of surviving and telling the truth.
My name is Leib, and Gavriel, and Yehudah
a thousand times murdered and dying.
I wake, and confront with the author of God
unfeeling, unseeing, unmoving, beloved.
Of meetings where glances speak
stronger than shrieks,
and never having met, on meeting,
remembering.

Why, I am asking, is it so difficult
to read
the last few chapters remaining?
And tears fill my eyes,
and strangle my tongue
escaping in pain.

In New Jersey, in Madison
my bed and my paintings
removed by thousands of miles
and decades of time.
In giving me life, my soul entered.
A fragment of all
that have left at that time.
Released from the bodies of those who were burned
escaping from tall, ashen chimneys.

That fragment remains, and marks me
with ash
as charcoal absorbed in my pores.
That fragment remembers
and makes me retell
the pain of my people
with tears.

Why ponder such thoughts
knowing for sure
that in us our ancestors live.
Impatient in knowing
that my seed contains
the germ of my future father.

RAINBOW DIVISION

This is the fifth day
of a fifteen day month,
or is it a year that lasts
for five weeks or more?
My thoughts drift away
from the simultaneous contrast

of bands in orange-gold and blue
cut by reds and emerald greens.
Reflected on the clothes
I wear to work,
and on my hands, boots
and eyebrow.

One year of thought
that brought forth the droplets
which now, in the light,
present me with this rainbow.
Replenishing itself
with each stroke of my brush
touching the canvas.

The sun will strike the strips
from the left,
and above the table there will glow
a rainbow to welcome you home.

Like a cell
which has no host body to destroy
colors grow and multiply in my head.
And there seems not enough paper
or wood, or canvas
to hold them all.
Like Midas gone berserk
touching everything,
yet for gold not asking,
my soul grows rich.

LUXURY

On this bed my father died.
and now I sleep here
with a feather bed covered.
Arctic air enters
through cracks in the windows,
and I am up
alone
and writing these lines.

What joy he had
in buying this bed;
that finally
his son won't have to sleep on the couch.
How often I would find him
relaxing in here,
and looking out on the doors
of the temple across the street.

I sleep here
alone,
and afraid of knowing
what he surely knows
for eight lonely years.

How small is my burden
when being compared
to the empty,
repeating, days
of my mother.

She lives here.
A place poorly furnished,
with mismatched and broken
pieces of wood;
excuses for furniture.

She loves me.
And in her eyes
I'm the only thing
that she has in the world.

Who am I,
that in such luxury,
am thinking of only
the life of my own?
Not seeing a woman
for a month, maybe two.

How could she
live those eight years
knowing
he will never return.

Would you scorn this house,
with holes in the carpets,
with second-hand table
and chairs,
and the clothes, rich,
which someone else
found no more use of
to call them their own.

I have spoken my heart
in misguided verses.
I have emptied my brain
of the burden therein.

I am cut off from my work
and am doing nothing
which in any way

could be called
a thought or a gift.
I am waiting for days to pass
even quicker,
and nights to be speedy
waiting for dawn.

I'm angry and brave.
I'm happy and shattered.
I'm sinful in thought,
and love sick in mind.
I'm thrashing, confused.

GUEST OF HONOUR

My friends are throwing a party.
And I am the one
they are honoring.
My friends are gathering
to come and see someone
who for years has not been there.
They were anticipating
to see me with you.

In forty eight hours
come good or come bad,
I'll be sitting with them
and be smiling.
Will I tell them some jokes.
Will I talk without stop.
Will I laugh,
Will I sing,
Will I hope.
Will I look at my smile
and feel empty inside.

PLASTER CAST

My hand in a plaster cast
scrawls unevenly
the letters on this page.
Just now,
having finished stripping the tape
from my new pieces.
Color exposed to light
light exploding in color
on the walls.
There is no pain
when I discover again
the final nature of the work I created.

I'm happy as a kid
getting my first real leather soccer ball.
There is no pain
as each strip of painted wood is exposed.
The discovery of a finished painting
conquers it.
So does the codeine
which now circulates through my system.
Amazing how transient are my thoughts
already wanted to do more.
Amazing, as a part of what was once my own flesh
lies now in a bottle
in some hospital lab.
My right hand is very warm now.
All the blood rushing to it
with antibodies to combat
the intrusion of the surgeon's scalpel.
In a rush of four nights,
with little sleep,
and exhilarating fatigue,
the work was finished.

In half remembered phrases I dream
of incompletely sketched events.
Not waiting for a crystal clear future
to focus my thoughts on.

Other events swirl about as a blur
of quickly changing camera shots.
The only thing in sharp focus
are the hues on the walls
of my studio,
and the intermittent sharpness
of pain in my wrist.
And I write this note
holding only plaster covered gauze
between my fingers.

AFFIRMATION

I wrote the letter
to affirm
our rights to confusion.
I wrote against phantoms
tearing,
calling in a language
I half understand
in anger against hope.
I wrote
a scream against uncertainty,
a prayer for being acknowledged.

Today,
in the echo of words written,
refusing to die,
I stand
under cold winter's trees
and a summer's sky.

REPETITION

Repetition of shapes
and rhythms.
Lying embraces,
and kisses, soft,
yet felt in spite
Against hope not quite dead.
Yet fear for reality being
repetitiously worse.

Flight of thoughts in peace
chasing confusion.
Repetition of changed sheets.
Not giving up an ounce
of my spirit.

Nothing has changed.
Episodes of not being united
alone together,
in a dawn-lit room.

when one leaves
another one enters,

and one is still not there.

TO ONE OF THE THIRTY SIX

After bringing forth
sounds
from hands writing long ago
through throats new
untrained and young.
Again
letters by your hand
through your cords
find sound.
They will find answers
in brilliant colors
placed on white
by a friend's fingers.

TWO SURPRISE KISSES

Two surprise kisses;
one short, and one doubly long.
Hair out of place,
and eyes that glisten in laughter
remind me
no one
treads the world.
And though separate
there is life for ages.

How quick to change a mood.
How quick the blood of Spring stirs.
Pledges of common shepherds
seem granite fast to this question:

How many degrees,
bestowed by Academia
could make a man
think so brilliantly
with his groin?

EARLY MORNING

The morning is early,
or am I staying up late?
The coffee is hot,
and character lacking.
The black slate counter
is really Formica.
The pen which was borrowed
from a waitress.
A person I met and loved
in the night.
Choices appear,
and promises are spoken.
Please make up my mind
I am open to share,
if my colors will please you
then walk in.

BROKEN RECORD

This broken record will stop tonight
and this page no more will amplify
the sounds of my mind.
Tears in my chest,

and pain in my eyes
tongue pushing back on the throat.
The sound of falling trees
that no one
cares to hear.
Tear out this empty cancer
that now grips my soul.
The words I write
are chemotherapy for my being.
Now, in the fifth hour
of the day, still in darkness;
I try to coax sleep to my eyes,
and to conquer this fear alone.

SLEEP

Sleep
Sleep, my brain,
Sleep, my friend.
Sleep, come near!
Sleep, replenish,
Sleep, provide
strength
that I may sleep in peace.

WARM CINDERS

I have seen the fires of Hell
with Bach's Brandenburg playing.
Late night anger,
and biting hands.
Uncontrolled terror,
and a child badly bruised
by a father
who is trapped in his fear.
I stepped in afraid,
yet my presence seemed to stop
this rage screaming out
against love.
I sit, for hours
and make small talk
looking into the fires of a home's fireplace.
What pain. Since where love
should warmed be by dying embers,
I saw the acid red-yellow
tongue of hate.
Hell among expensive furniture.

STRENGTH

I have kissed
and cried
embraced
lied
forgotten
fought
won
and died,
But why is it
that you
could find objection
to an off color joke
when the child
protected
from my shameless tongue
sees its skin turn blue
from a father's hand.
Above all I live
love
and without vengeance
feel strong.

NIGHTMARE

What twists
a perfect reflection
into nightmares of you?
What hurts the pride
and the man that is you?
I can't empathize with you
since I can't understand
how hurting your child
will make you be at peace
and vindicated.

PEACE

Wrong calendar date
and the wrong subject for my thoughts.
I can't write of love
being a witness.
Alone you might have to remain
and the only friend
will leave you also now.
No reason explains your actions,
and no excuse will do for scaring
a few people who love you.
Peace will not come from the pill you have taken.
And taking more will no more be enough.

SPRING

I saw a flock
of small,
very black,
birds,
heading north
in a dense,
ever-changing,
dark cloud
of moving wings.

A rusty sign
MOBIL REGULAR
twenty-nine
cents a gallon.
Miles
of closed stations
and boarded up
tourist traps.
Jagged pieces
of two foot thick
ice floes
grotesquely wounding
the beer can decorated
shore.

Two crows
slowly,
with arrogance
and regret
rising into the air
from a decomposing
body
of a small animal
turned flat
by passing cars.

Two hawks
circling
on warm air
rising
from the
sun warmed
field.

The Delaware Gap
distinguishes itself
on the horizon
like a hatchet gash

into the mountain's body.
Brownish green fields
and Stones
on my cassette player.
Sometimes old Beatles,
and my mind
thinking of the Gong Show.

The well dressed pederast,
sitting in judgment over a man,
ugly - singing a felt love song.
With his caked up face, the judge
made a grimace of thought
with a brain which can only be compared
in intellect to an over baked squash.

Patches
of snow
unthawed
between trees
on wooded hills.
Overflowing rivers
along curved roads
and
smooth stoned
waterfalls.
Two dollars
spent
on gas to get me home
with a self-made promise
not to write.

Buds on the trees
thicken the branches,
and I know
that Spring
will soon return.

PIPE ASHES

Pipe ashes
on a French floral pattern
yellow and white
petals of a second-hand sofa.
My hand
half free
plaster replaced
by white gauze.
A zigzag pattern
of stitches
in my skin.

Joy of movement.
Friends who gave me
this clumsy bit of furniture
are in distances of my memory
of a place that was
in my youth.
Nothing,
Nothing fatigues
like repetition.
Sisyphean tasks
to earn the right to breathe.
Head
pounding with the pulse
of pain in my wrist.
Touch my forehead.
Kiss my eyes
Against the Evil Eye.

REST

Again I ask for rest,
and try to close
the pages of this notebook.
Again I have to go out
and amuse myself
with time better spent.
Again a wall
of debts and promises
isolates me
in a ring of steel.
Again I write
lines to bore
my best patient thoughts.

Again I do not admit
that many friends
sometimes do not
take loneliness away.

EXCESS KNOWLEDGE

Today,
with excess knowledge
I come to sleep
and find only thoughts
laying beside me.

Beware
of friends wearing togas
with knives to pierce

Yet no divination
can stop time
from happening.

How many distant promises
not kept.
Reducing the number of
white squares on the wall
day by day
with multicolored
crosses and marks.

Like California
sliding into the ocean
no certainty of time
remains.
Should it slide,
would it float?

Remember
my message to friends
who loved me
and my parents.
Toys of tin
in funny boxes
made in China.

Ten hours of flight
fighting the turning
whirlwind of a spinning Earth.
Catching up to a lost day
which dawned twice.

Music penetrating
with chords of bases,
playing love with my mind.

SHOULD YOU READ THESE WORDS

Should you read these words
in times much distant
from this moment my pen
listens to the whispers of my mind.
This paper does belong to me,
it became mine the instant
the red ink wrote these words
Like trees on the property I own,
they are mine only for the fact
that I can now take care of them.
No written deed gives me
a real claim to the land.

DECEIVE THE DISTANCE

Like mountains in New Mexico
or on the Sinai Plain
seemingly five miles distant;
within reach
of a slow drive, yet
after an hour
of reckless speeding
towards them, they
still remain clear and crisp,
beautiful on the far horizon.

Reaching for objects
with one eye held shut
my hands miss the mark
chasing a speck of dust
imbedded on my cornea
which only moves with
each motion of my eye.

Envyng Sisyphus
his having the mountain top
clear before his
sweating brow and boulder
Not until the top
would the rock turn
and tumble backwards to the abyss.

Deceive the distance.
Laboring blindly behind the boulder
I can tell not, even for a second,
how far to the peak;
and to know when to step aside
when this piece of frozen lava
starts rolling down again.

A tenth of a second
to move away
before the weight again
splits the marrow from my bones,
and my flattened heart
stops pumping, if even for a moment,
the fluid to feed my brain;
the only thing with which I feel life
when only my emotions do my thinking.

MARCH

March ended today.
April fools'
is the next day
on the wall
though two weeks
of time
will pass
until the Earth
catches up
to my choice.

How could I dare to presume such
omnipotence on my part
in moving time?

I simply tore
one page out.

GRAYING YOUTH

Dear to me as the brother's love
I was not to have
since hunger's grasp wrestled it from me.
Graying youth with open heart
and a mind to sense
the slightest shift of feelings.
Rejoicing in your joys,
as you have shared of my life.
Angry in intense not agreeing,
and loving a friend more
because only one's love
strengthens the desire to be understood.
Your arms are open in welcome.
You the father of children
loving them like friends,
and loving a friend
like son-brother combined.
From the lofty to the mundane,
from years of existing
to laughter which is
and is to be.
I share your thoughts
as you clarify mine.

TOYS ARE MADE OF TIN

I remember you.
Bent over an article of clothing
by the big windows
lighting the room

your third finger
misshapen
from years of pushing
the needle with a thimble.
Mother was cooking,
and you sang songs
from before the war;
tears and laughter in your voice.
And I, your surviving son
sang with you
the words you taught me,

As I stood not far away
painting on my canvas
Mother glowed with joy
looking at us,
and hearing our voices.
Treasures of her being,
and her being
our most cherished treasure.
Now I can hear your song
beyond the din
of my everyday life.
And tears fill my heart
and joy spills with tears
that I can conjure you
while you are not here.
The black basalt stone
is mirror polished.
White is the star
and Morris Galles
beloved husband and father
are white marks on the
polished surface.
Reflected in it
are two figures
of a young man
and a woman old only in pain.
Only an ant trods through the blades of grass,
as I put a small stone on your grave.
I can't see through the ground.

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