

I

Read a few lines --- how long can it take?  
Then forget not to play your lute - since  
blood still stains my finger tips.

II

"Why dwell on this heaviness  
weighing around your heart?",  
they asked, more than once.  
Is it to become the living proof of sader poems?  
Is your ambition so dull that it stops at the first curse?  
So, we sing, slightly out of tune,  
angel songs:  
gray notes,  
white pauses and dark sighs.

III

I remember musing:  
"Teens, we were playing on the stoop of big  
buildings.  
Laughter and dreams -  
Houses of stones and dust - washed ashore in  
a few short years - are they memories, yet?  
Sometimes I sigh: how many lives have I lived  
since my birth?"

IV

Diotima was known to raise the obvious high above our heads.  
*"In our lives, what is mundane?  
Our limbs? Our moves? Our senses?  
I can heal your fear of Paradise.  
Remember that your higher stakes  
are two nuts and a lemon..."*

A student said: "I am below who I should be. Isn't that the ultimate sin?"  
Brug-pa answered:

*"Song of happiness, I want them to hear you from afar - I bellow  
you, song of happiness."*

Wasn't it a strange reply?

This story reminds me of the stubborn way the old masters used to greet us:

- "How is your heart?", would they ask.
- "Certainly full of regrets - a fragile wooden barrel eaten by termites and ready to explode", would we typically answer.
- "Yes, but how is your heart"?, would they ask again.



VI

Sometimes, I wonder: where did my friends go?  
They wrote numerous books and painted a few original watercolors -  
What is left of them? a mere glitter.  
Some, I recall, described the horror of being men, women, lost in the hostile  
universe while others composed fair notes of sweet stillness.  
In the meantime, I wrote many screen plays, claiming that I wanted to share  
some music and one or two images.  
The music is still playing in the background - songs of beggars, melodies drawn  
from remote centuries -  
floating along narrow streets  
filled at times - of slow dancing shadows.  
I don't have many readers  
and even less listeners  
but mine was at times a golden solitude with angel maids bringing hot water  
and chocolate - "Are you comfortable at all?"

The libraries were full, as I remember.  
Where would my biography fit?  
Square tables - four readers per table.  
A mournful silence.  
No one glanced at me.  
I looked down and there was a sentence in an open book:  
*"Do not leave anything  
Do not take anything  
Well centered within yourself and the world  
Enjoy your time on earth*

## VII

Deprived of great speeches to pronounce, I diluted myself  
- lost drop in a crowd swarming into a theosophist arena.  
The loudest lecturers debated on what came first: *Chaos ? Earth? Love?*  
A master whispered in my ear: "*You should be a student of **small wonders***".

## VIII

One of Brug-pa's disciples noted:

"Elitism is not so bad.

Do you remember the barking philosophers  
who made their public squirm in their  
seats?.

They are a few hundred years old but since  
their opinions originated in higher  
altitudes, their laughter seems capable to  
wreck the anemic lungs of our most  
popular thinkers."

## IX

### *Poetry reading (a definition)*

Even though we had vast sand lots in which we could play,  
I may have borrowed one image or two from other childhoods.  
Did I ever wear these Latin white socks that tan men used to show off on  
Sundays?  
Did I go to mass in the morning just to sigh before the incredible beauty of  
young girls glowing in a religion that was not mine?

X

A translator of Brug-pa confessed:

"I spent mornings, afternoons and some of my nights, painting and drinking perfumed tea..

Some other disciples consumed their lives discriminating between "instasy" and "ecstasy".

I ran my fingers over the smoothest skin.

My goal was to translate and dissolve."

The same man translated the "*Laws of the Whiter Dejection*" in which we find:

*"Truth approaches men  
then all turn to noon;  
Alas, ever somber habits  
darken their days;  
Lightning may strike at night..  
This is why wise men confound all shades of  
gray with the sun."*

XI

I weave a fabric of quotes and lightness - then of pathos and ridiculous mannerism.

Playful book

Open to readers

smoking a pipe of dry grass in the morning,  
gently laughing without showing their wrath.

XII

Who can surrender, an instant or two -

(if only an instant)

to avoid regrets

(maybe to forget that we never chose between pain and perfection)?

XIII

In the introduction of the *Laws of the Whiter Dejection*, there is an observation about the *age for playing*.

"It lasts usually much longer than what scholars had predicted  
Those who bypass it seem to talk more than necessary."

Too often, papers from the past can be found  
Written by shriveled children  
whose cruel tears turn slowly into sheer cruelty:

"Hearts worried at times  
who still shiver from hope  
How can we free  
Friends and neighbors  
trapped in their inner cities.  
usually crying: oh, so lonely?"

If their calls are heard often  
Why answer once in a while?

"You came last in my dreams  
and only caught a drawn out summary  
of who I should be  
I always miss your embrace!"



XIV

Diotima is said to have had many lovers.  
She often longed for the one who wrote:

*"I feel - oh, do I feel...  
from anger, from repulsion,  
through desire, through pleasure  
and anguish and aches*

*I rise and break  
run to the court  
forget what I just bought  
and stare at the weeds*

*Smiles on the mirror  
ice and glass  
no matter who dances -  
reflections only pass*

*I wonder why my days are so hollow -  
What can I do  
but rejoice  
and hallow all joys?"*

XV

Yesterday, I painted again this famous sentence - this time on a leaf of tea:

*"Who is in our house?  
Who else could it be?"*

XVI

*Religion* (another definition, painted a long time ago on a scroll of rice paper)

From the shore they see the *wave*  
From the boat they study the *wave*  
In the picture they observe the *wave*  
In their armchair they think the *wave*

I swim, vinegar and foam  
- suddenly high above -  
about to crush me  
or to swirl  
- the *wave!*

XVII

Diotima used to remember this prayer said to the gods of another generation:

*"Chase all clouds  
clean our vision clear  
give us the eyesight of the hawk  
and if You wish  
lose us as usual."*

XVIII

A quote from "*THE DAIRY OF THE BAKER WHO LEFT HIS TOWN FOR A SONG*":

"My nights are of carmine lust  
Women grounded  
in earthy gardens  
Passing, always, through their age -  
their white skin glistening inside my moister dreams  
When I kneel down  
Who believes that I am still praying?"



XIX

The man called *"The Bishop of Smaller Souls"* told us, one evening:

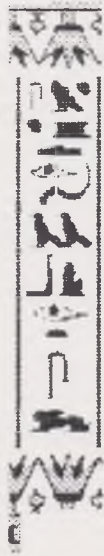
"They summoned me  
Thus I went very well dressed, indeed.  
They lacerated my clothes  
one by one, precisely.  
They stripped me in their garden  
- Inebriating smells and thorns -  
You must understand them:  
I was so hard of hearing."

This *"Bishop of Smaller Souls"* pretended to have been invited into the company of angels.

I happened to be, at the time, very interested in this topic.

A master of the Paqûda School smiled:

*"Seeking the company of angels is a good hobby  
not very different from streaming down Main  
Street  
or playing cards in the early afternoon  
It is very good entertainment, indeed")*



XX

Was it an angel or a human who said to God:

*"Thou count the very steps*

*Of my wandering life"*)

Angels always seem to clamor for any body's attention...

Humans also, of course -

their excuse, I suppose, is that they die alone.

XXI

Pawn shop - we enter with a tear!

Fragile rentals - and a cry!

Solitude has men as its most faithful customers...

At sunset, the bar located on the poor side of town  
explodes with laughter and games

Nobody can even envision Philosophy

since there's no solitude in sight -

... then, in the very heart of the commotion

Alcohol comes down the wrong pipe.

*(The bar is bound  
for the silence of heroic ages.*

*Clouds of wine and beer*

*break in the darkest alley:*

*"The time of men is but a wink")*

However, immersed in this time of men

we'll still learn some verse, like

*"I dance before Thou*

*In the light of the Living."*

And soon, we'll sing again

and at the top of our lungs.

One of my listeners said:

"If you keep on quoting phrases like:

*"He remembered he was a breath  
which goes and does not come back".*

then, what is your purpose?

Silence should be your sole conclusion."

I do wonder about genuine writing...

(if life was so simple, why all these words?

if my song is so melodious

why did my neighbor claim he saw me

howling at the young moon?

if my principles were authentic, how can you

identify my footprints in the desert?)

I spread apart white laced curtains:

to discover endless blue

only darkened by my own eyelashes.

Must I repeat my plea?

One twilight ago or so,

it was raining

sweet memories floating

in empty studies

But one question, suddenly:

Why do young people get tired of life?

(what keeps on smiling among changing trees?

hidden among leaves of fears

and dancing, shaded even at high noon?)

Sometimes I write that I know

as if it was a mortal sin.

## XXIII

At times, we are kinder.  
Our dreams wrapped in satin,  
we curtsy and pay respect  
allowing our simplest ecstasy to extend its wings -

Raise, brothers and sisters,  
you, the strongest - forever seeking immortality and finding  
at the bottom of the well  
cries already cried  
and whispers:

*"We remain foreigners in Your place  
You let us stay close to You  
So did our fathers -  
Why punishing us?  
Tomorrow we may be gone,  
not knowing our way back..."*

## XXIV

Diotima designed a kingdom never too liberal.  
She engraved at its gate:

"Freedom is not ours to legislate".

Was she joking when she said: "Our state is of fairy tales"?

In her youth, she asked the travelers to please pull up a chair in the late  
morning.

"Don't think of going to work unless you  
know enough songs to carry you through  
the night."

Her prime minister was in charge of developing all pleasures, from wandering  
in sculpture gardens at sunrise to smelling fresh tea in a poorly lit study.

Also, crowds never gathered in her kingdom.

XXV

I had many certitudes  
I held them tight, since all winds were to blow them away.  
Where were these swirling currents coming from?

Sometimes a reader may stumble upon these words, printed remains of a life of  
futility...

That is when he feels like the rich man who gave alms  
and bitterly regretted his wasting money.  
When I write, you see, I strive to give but only can I reminisce.

Don't I remind you of the drunkard who stops in the middle of the street and  
starts thinking:

"I had a friend who chose carefully his  
partener - a superb person of high  
spirituality with whom he planned to have  
the most beautiful children."

And the drunkard bursts into laughters - who knows why?



## XXVI

A young poet wrote to Diotima:

*"Down below  
Rests our salvation  
I care for the obvious symbols  
as if they were my mother and father  
Lifting high above my head  
our unique wealth:  
the time of our lives.*

Diotima commented:

"Maybe he meant that our first names always shine as in the dedication of  
obscure psalms?

After all, isn't he from the school who believes we are bound for happiness?"

This school claimed:

"So we are, radiant in the rays of Genesee  
Angels occasionally kneel down before me.  
I cannot look back without seeing my own glory written  
beyond the Milky Way."

Diotima commented again:

"It is not that serious... since we are so forgetful."

## XXVII

One of Bru-pa's disciples was a wise man  
walking with a cane and calmly pacing his long journey.  
He liked to gaze at children for their games  
and women and their smiles.

He also knew how much we overlook our time on earth.  
That is why he wrote:

*"Time is freedom's nickname".*

## XXVIII

There is a book much studied in my country -  
(rather unknown in this province, though.)

It is called: "*Eve's Thirst, which is sacred*".

In its introduction, there is this quote:

"In times of violence  
why turning to *our* message of happiness?

**Mbwama** (*our master*) taught us:

"Even if you see me devoured by young  
lions,  
Remember that my doctrine only pledges  
for -peace of the heart."

## XXIX

A master used to say:

"If there are so few of us in modern days,  
it is not that wisdom is scarce  
but because the listeners scrutinize the speaker  
and forget to look after their own soul."

Another said:

"Mine is not a very new message.  
Humble, I'm not.  
Broken, yes at times.  
That is why  
my songs are held in high esteem  
in heavens and above."

Another said:

"My guide was a philosopher, a reknown doctor who lived very  
old.  
He taught us a sad smile."

XXX

In the "*Notebook of minor trials of life*", there is this definition:

*"The essence: what is left when men don't  
function, nor lower themselves and each  
other, nor remain busy, petty and fearful"*

XXXI

Virgile Eckhart, the man who wrote "*The Compendium of the Better Dancer*"  
attended a reunion around a topic called: "*The Crystal Second*".

Very bright speakers were scheduled to expose their views - when, attracted by  
the lights and the richness, several young and rather threatening-looking  
beggars stood at the door.

One orator was saying:

"This Crystal Second is indeed... everlasting.  
Try to talk about it,  
it eludes you..."

But the beggars interrupted him, yelling profanities...

This is how Virgile Eckhart transcribed the evening:

"They all spoke  
but none was ready"

When I asked Virgile Eckhart about that night, he answered in a good mood:

"No use avoiding my fears  
they're already too close.  
And why discuss?  
The only thing to do:  
widening my heart  
making it bigger than the size of a fierce  
bear"

It is the same Virgile Eckhart who wrote in his "*Compendium*":

"Do not fall asleep  
cuddled in your principles.  
When you wake up  
you'll shiver  
and wonder why is your bed so cold."



XXXII

One of Brug-pa's disciples wrote:

"My father gave me an inheritance:  
My thirst cannot be quenched"

XXXIII

I was longing for an endless joy.

"What is the first thing which comes to your mind", asked a  
master.

And he answered himself:

"It should be giddy games"

For most of us are prosperous  
but don't know it.



XXXIV

I heard the man next door shouting: "It is me - I come back from a hard day's work".

I heard of the young woman who ran the whole day in the woods,  
swam with fauns  
and held close a fawn -  
roaming  
foaming in delights.  
Pious people claim she had a home  
toward which she hurried at night  
her eyes sparkling  
with mysterious dreams.  
That is why I'm praying:  
Lord, let me spend my days in youth,  
O You, Lord of all Joys.

The man next door  
came from a family of warriors  
fierce characters of glory -  
statues!  
As time and birds offer their guano  
I remember the youth and her sparkling eyes.

XXXV

Streams of bitterness  
How we have tasted you!  
Have we always been so thirsty?  
But, underneath - what is it?  
We glance around, uncertain:  
Could it be another flavor of life?  
(life which is said to flow away,  
always... for never coming back)

XXXVI

*"Too long a hope leads to despair".* wrote  
Johan Hocheim.

In the bright cellars of our masters  
there is not much hope  
nor curiosity  
Outside pass on secretive young people  
striving for new ideas.  
Our masters -  
Who can hear your echo?  
You shake your head, smiling.  
"We are just in the shade".

One of them said:

"Some want the secrets of life  
Some need to cry for death"

One of them was in a solitude so full  
that nobody knew it was solitude.

Lowly love roams the cities  
as well as the luscious meadows  
- but only in the high season!  
As always, our masters smile  
and a breeze raises  
to befriend devils and demons.



Also - have you ever wondered what is left  
in your secret chests?  
and also - these smiles,  
which puzzled you for long dreams  
in dreary eyes?

I used to think  
of the fearful men led to discover instantaneous wisdoms  
sudden nirvanhas  
Shades of Jesus and bouddhas...  
But now, creeping from my scars  
the slow head shake of mature men  
found me...

If you see me lounging among various currents  
you ought to know my companion....

And I go right and left  
I meditate on the course of events -  
when a butterfly flies too fast by me  
Only then, do I proceed from one thought to the next.

And here is my next prayer  
Sparing my life, yes  
but without my joy?

Men afraid of losing  
the goddess of the smaller loss is playing with you  
Listen to my plea-  
I was her toy  
before I met you.

One more biographical verse:  
I shall dissolve like my other peers  
We are of blood and flesh  
and our reputation as poets  
spreads only beyond  
your tears  
and the dew of your routine days.

XXXVIII

I read a lot  
I forgot more  
I loves and suffered  
A few lines: my inheritance  
my legacy to you  
there is happiness  
yes - this old message  
always put in doubt  
we'll never face the inquisition who judgeed us when we claimed there is glory  
in the breath of an second  
there is joy beating in the world  
we won't wait, every day is your trial  
for me it is the step of the fool in the meadow  
falling and laughing  
did he hurt himself  
then, he's laughing  
among all my messages  
this one: love cannot be emprisonned  
it flows -  
men and women have their rules  
the sacred is wide - is deep  
oh, if it was less siomple, it would be more popular.



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