

Open Rebuke, Concealed Love

Tom Mandel

1.

What we cannot solve
ourselves we share, a simple shift
of letter from irresistible
last light to first darkness.

Paranomasia contrarium.
I could not see my fingertips
in the darkness. The horse
I rode stopped as if in fear
of our being betrayed.

Trees revealed an alleyway
of sky whose light
was all that led us, leaning over
our embrace in

a friendly manner, brother and
sister, old enough
to interfere in other loves
whose sorrows
now were nothing

whose histories
had vanished. Then recoiled;
we were left
to complain of each other,

of the day we met.
Yet, reappearing, the trees bent
before us to ask
forgiveness for their lapse,
and our fate forgot

it was to fall. There is no
need to hide
from a story we understand. No
need to explain.

2.

The master's words are mutual,
exclusive miracles
of concealed love. Do not

cut the foundation
from under these words
that infatuate us,
but follow at a distance

of critical passion,
impregnable to their discomfort,
terse and tense.

Distance hides love and with
deflected affinity
rebukes excesses that sting
the cryptic name.

They have not seen the sun
set miracles
a garment to adorn nor lines

on a hand lead
through a door to a creature
whose hand it is,
preserving what we were told.

Would I rejoin
what I left willingly moments ago?
What we know

from a book, no need to ask
of nature. An
Odyssey's no place to stage
one's return.

3.

To the refined and learned
aristocrats, gathered for wine,
music and poetry,
the poet inside writing for himself
only, or for his fellows,

has before him the model of their lives
their real needs
ranging, in courtly lyric genre
of love, praise,
wine and complaint, rhymed adages
to delight the lords.

Idiosyncratic single realms
selected to fuse,
sudden, emerge? Place breathes
a hidden image of power,
sets the soul into its sighs.

Exile, death.
Where does our land belong on
this map? Go on,
are we one people, you
with round hats
we bareheaded, leaning back?

When the will turns,
as if one drew in breath,
the soul returns
to origin. One origin, exhalation,
inhalation, then return.

Time began, and now at once
it ends. Warriors
roar in the ramparts of words.
A well-placed objection
explodes the wall. Wisdom ought not
die, nor words

live alone like hermits.
Enrich yourselves with others' breath.
A story does not
dominate: to the crowd I give my
heritage, to the mind.

4.

Grave, sufficient within itself,
satisfied to be so,

consciously meditative and sober,
purged of all
formal brilliance, eccentricity,

of the surface
admired for itself, it renounces

range of choice.
In a few meters its focus speaks
resoundingly.

It neglects the inner disintegration
(*anadiplosis, ut pictura*

poesis) of clear-cut ideas,
perceptible, expected,
successive. Metaphor is its local

ornament & conveys
its ideas in a new setting of words.

However startling, every
image is fixed topos, feigning
stimulation of the reader

in *'ostranenie'*. The subject
demands to be conveyed.

5.

We have no secret tradition
to impregnate
the soul in creation. When we
were lost, our

sciences too were lost. Set aside
for a moment,
later what had been received

could not be found.
A few memories remain, fragments
shattered in the face
of philosophy's demonstrations.

One example: Adam
sinned and fell from the wall;
he broke into pieces.

To believe your own praise will
kill you. All
"the king's men" could not put
Adam together again.

No vessel contains a fluid
more precious than
this lost body of secrets,

an empty jar
we keep in our kitchen
to recall
the good things it contained.

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