

THE YOUNG LISTENER

The young man sits on a chair and listens.

He listens to the wind and the birds
that sing as they move about, the waves of
the roaring waters, the pouring rain sounding
on the sidewalk, the swaying of the trees
and the grasses in the wind.

He listens to his mother, although a very quiet woman,
he can hear her thinking, he hears
his father's footsteps, the laughing and giggling
of his younger sister, in the company of her friends,
and his little baby brother, who only knows how to cry.

The young man is eighteen years old and still
sits quietly on his chair, away in the corner,
and listens.

He can hear the sounding of
car horns screeching in the street, the sounds
that a train will make as it goes by, the
sound of the school bell and the church bell
ringing to signify the next sight on the street.

He can hear the sound
and lift of the elevator in the bigger department
stores, the kicking of heels as the people rush by,
the slamming of huge doors, the people yelling for a taxi,
the loud and deafening whisper of the congregation.

He is in tears, unable to understand the true
meaning of these sounds, unable to
associate them with real life.

He listens to the voice of his priest, the harsh
tone of his fearful words, the message which
all are accepting as Christ's word, the pounding
of solid fists on the pulpit and the silence
which spreads and fills the corners of the cathedral.

He listens to his special doctors, the uselessness
of their comforting phrases, the words which
he must face and accept as being true, the
hopelessness of his planned future career, and the
realization that nothing can change his condition.

He fears the words of these priests and doctors,
admits to himself the loss of hope, and
then continues his recollection of shattered dreams.

Finally, so tired of sitting in his little corner,
he stands up off his chair and walks towards
the huge window, only in vain as he clumsily falls
over all the toys and obstacles in his way.
But finally he reaches it and stares at the world.

He can hear all the familiar sounds that
he remembered from his little corner. Nothing has
changed; nothing is different. The people stare back
at him. He doesn't care. And then, he begins to cry
with huge tears rolling down his trembling cheeks.

He wants very much to see and understand this outside world.
But he can't. He is blind.

-Roseveldt Sivitilli

PARTS

A peculiar pointlessness, pursuing myself:
To look back, I see me,
To look ahead, I see me,
Yet because it is a chase,
I have neither the time nor the inclination
To look to either side.

Like humour with wisdom
Like age with neither;
Like ignorance with innocence
Like youth with neither;
Like life with meaning
Like death with neither;

- John Dempsey

A FEW RHYMES ON DYING

River flowing to the sea,
carry off a part of me.
The part that makes me seem so free,
lying 'neath this old oak tree;
dreaming things that cannot be,
'cause people die so easily
My God they vanish suddenly
into a land so far from me -
River flowing to the sea,
find a way to set me free.

Patrick O'Brien

IN A CORNER OF THE NIGHT

Somewhere
Morning is slapping someone
In the face, and night
Is slowly slinking away
Like a reluctant child to bed.
And somewhere
In night's corner
It is noon.

Holds no longing in its swelling,
This bloodless heart
But when the morning stretches
Like a hungry cat
Prepared for the day's hunting,
Then his sheep will look up.

And he wonders at the indifference.
Looking around, he feels all the concern of the universe
Flow from him to the world
As rays from a sun
And over all the earth
It is noon.

So this is death:
And as we shared birth
We share this slow violence.

The centre is growing
And will swallow all that
Surrounds it.

And when changes have died
And are sown in sedentary summer,
Dying seeds of dead seasons,
Lengthless memories in shrinking minds,
Then our mighty germ
Will be
Still.

So this is heat:
Not passionate, not lusty,
Only thirsty, just
Thirsty.
The oceans have boiled away.
Even the wind is dead.
The atmosphere was split,
The airy air, in little pieces,
Has become something else,
Somewhere else.

So we were born at once:
Must your death bring mine?
All things powerful
Are vulgar
Except indifference,
And the indifferent.

And this is indifferent
Death.

So this is pain:
A cold comfort:
Are we in labour?
Is this another birth?

- John Dempsey

PART

life is no struggle - living is.
dying is no question - death is.

From where we are,

- John Dempsey