

Treatise on nighttime walks and farcical misery

Poem

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Abstract Sadness, despite the negative experience it implies, is often relished when it comes. Whether through weepy music or a tear-jerking film, we allow sadness to compound upon itself rather than avoiding it. What happens when one then seeks sadness as an object in itself, i.e. the effect without the cause? How much do we live in service of our sentimentality?

Résumé La tristesse, malgré les expériences qu'elle sous-entend, est souvent quelque chose dont on se délecte quand elle arrive. Que ce soit par le prisme d'une musique larmoyante ou un film émouvant, nous permettons à la tristesse de s'accumuler plutôt que de l'éviter. Que se passe-t-il lorsque l'on recherche la tristesse comme un objet en soi, soit l'effet sans la cause ? Dans quelle mesure vit-on au service de notre sentimentalité ?

Keywords sentimentality; night; soul; perception

Plunge the pen in and sketch out the grave:
I have consecrated my young years
to fawning over the soul.

My life is but a mirage of suds from the foot baths of sentiment,
and from my skeleton bloom the calluses of thoughts
I have overworked like pack animals in sundried deserts.

I bow to my awareness
rivaling insect eyes and kaleidoscopes,
then step into it like trousers.
And unlike wool, it will last far too long,
immune to the moth bites of time.
One sturdy garment we have,
one to admire our rear-end in for decades
before we are buried without shoes.

Bound to the contract of the soul,
whose payroll I suck at like an infant in the wake of tears,
I go about town sporting my awareness,
earning commission.
I see you, mangled act of kindness!
I hear you, lovers' laughter which has not yet dappled my own breath
and which embroiders pain on my heart!
I recite you, page 967 of the human code!
City council is relieved to have a freelancer on duty,
rooting around in neglected corners and
surveying all of history.

forever will I be its scribe and its ode,
the poem that domesticates the water lilies,
that croons back at the gulls,
that swabs sunlight from the left nostril of the Earth.
No condition of humanity gets past me—
I am a frog swatting flies with my tongue!

From an upstairs crowd,
I could pick out the soul's footsteps,
and those of its offspring foxtrotting the lacquer away!
I am so intimate with feeling that,
rather than counting sheep to weary myself into dreams,
behind my eyes I produce a map of its every freckle,
which I have kissed into memory under countless doses
of lamplight.
Like my own caffeine sensitivity I know feeling!
Like my birthday I know it,
like the torch song
performed on one's first heartbreak.

And when this darling sentiment, courier of the soul, slips by
like smoke from entryway-smothered cigarettes,
back out I go hunting for it,
teasing my nose with a scrap pulled from the last thing it wore.
Alone in stale undershirts and in a tedium of darkness
I vagabond, shimmy along,
and beg for alms from the sky who is blindfolded
by a stainless gauze of stars.
Then sooner or later, after reprimanding the pompous sky,

some brutal feeling drops down from the heavens
through the burnhole of the moon
to offer me declarations.

Enlightened, I scurry away to go and make mischief
with my airlifted disaster.
With my left hand, I ignite the streetlamps,
garnishing the *mise-en-scène* of the wooing I do with my misery,
as my right forever dabs sweat from the soul's waterlogged brow.
It's a misanthrope's Christmas!
But, servant to the soul, I must work as I make merry.
There is no Boxing Day in the chambers of the spirit.

Why this little lamb? I sometimes ask of my continual prophecy,
but how could it not be me,
whose eyes are drowsy with snowfall?
These are the eyes in the police sketch
with which darling sentiment tracks me from on high
No one is better equipped to conceive torture
within the innocence-lined womb of a street corner
perfectly suited to celebration.
I am an amateur at beauty and gratitude,
much preferring to plaster on my spirit's bulletin boards
fresh tragedies
which I change out as the bedpan is changed out
from the undercarriage of the dying.

What purpose do I have for loveliness
with midnight shipwrecked in the clouds?
Bouquets are but a copse sentenced to be felled by prairie fire,
landing on the lover's toe.
He howls in pain, and the wind howls, too,
but the former whines beyond my range
in the frequency of dogs.

I come when the wind cries out for help,
tangled in the barbed wire of someone else's grief,
and dance until I am no longer young—
forevermore with my head in the twelve o'clock clouds
which bind mournful poems into rain.

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