

Sampler from *Lost & Found: Poems Found All Around*¹

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Nothing

“Nothing seems to be right anymore. Everything tastes a little waxy.” —Bembo making moan

After a visit to the dentist, friend,
consider the bitter truths of the ancients:
how our taste buds mutiny, our teeth
grow long, and the globed fruit
of our being, about which our
pal Archie² discourses, sticks
out the calyx of its tongue
and talks back. Oh for the
days of mute regressive glory!
We look back, poking our tongue
into memory’s corner, reconnoitering
the moments when everything we probed
tasted good, so good, our dinners exquisite,
our thoughts divine, our old ladies young ladies,
and we ourselves bursting into bloom. Ahem.
Your attention, please, one moment, you old dozer.
Your forbearance, if you would, whilst I extract the wax
from my hairy ear. What exactly is your bellyache?

¹ From the foreword to the book: “In the largest sense, I came to realize, a poem can be found, as the subtitle of this volume suggests, ‘all around.’ If we are open, or receptive, to language in its multifarious guises, we can’t help but be astonished by what happens when mouths are opened, pens picked up, and the babbling begins. If language is purely a transactive medium, of course, an exchange of this bit of information for that bit, we might not feel a sense of wonder in the exchange. But if we vibrate with the rhythmic suggestions of language — its intricacies, subtleties, marvels, ludicrosities — then how can we help but be amazed and astonished?”

² See Archibald MacLeish, “Ars Poetica.”

Reverie

For Jennifer

Dawnhead flashes *improbable ground of essence*. Then thunder. Then leap from bed to computer only to find philosophical twaddle: Aristotle and his *to ti en einai* (*Metaphysics*, VII, 7), that whereby a thing is what it is, fundamental ground of the soul, whatever the soul is and who knows?

Return to bedrock, then, wife's soft round rump rising with her breathing: content, for the time being, all we have: pull duvet up, pat ground of essence softly, softly murmuring *love, love, love*.

Men's Health

From the magazine of the same name

How can I express sufficient gratitude
for your March issue, which reveals,
once and for all, the answers to the life
questions I have been asking, vainly,
for years and years: How to Melt My
Man Boobs, How to Leave Her Moaning
for More, and, best of all, How to Tell
the Grim Reaper to Go to Hell. I'm going
to Man Up, for sure, Kick Ass When
Surrounded by Bullies, Lose 20 Pounds
in 4 Short Weeks, and Last Longer in Bed.
I might have to give up poetry for a while,
but what the hell, isn't poetry for sissies?
Thanks for the revelations.

The Cypriot Way³

For Shawn & Kerie

He bade her swim around the black rock
thrice, till she was bushed, beached,
clasped in his arms, and then proposed:
Aphrodite, he said, on his knees, will you
marry me? Everything else being as it is,
he suggested, it's not really such a bad deal
after all. I can cook and I can clean, my queen.
The American beauty swooned. He took her
in his arms to the bridal suite. His Cypriot
friends in the street below raised their wine
glasses and shouted huzzah! huzzah! huzzah!

³ Cyprus is the place where Aphrodite rose from the foam. According to legend, swimming around Aphrodite's Rock will assure eternal beauty. My friend and neighbor Shawn Allen had his fiancée Kerie swim around the rock and then proposed to her. Lo and behold, a happy ending with marriage and two beautiful girls.

Tenderness

After Svetlana Alexievich

Russian women, do you crave a little male tenderness?
We are all yours, heroes of the Great Patriotic War,
come back with medals if not arms or legs, no matter.
Invalids they call us, the apparatchiks, shoving us
squealing like pigs into taxis and dumping us
in dilapidated villas far out in the countryside.

Women, do you crave tenderness? So many million
Russian males shot and killed, splattered by machine
guns, blown into bits by mortars, flattened by tanks.
Out here we are gaining weight, cheer, rotundity.
All in all, we are looking pretty good, aren't we?

Come, bring your wheelbarrows and baby buggies,
trundle us along the rutted road toward home.
Take us in your arms, darlings, give us a kiss.
We are such simple trusting creatures, men.
Take us, please. Take us all.