

THE NIGHT IS A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN.

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ABSTRACT**THE NIGHT IS A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN****Vincenzo Albanese**

This manuscript consists of a variety of short lyrics, ranging from elegy to apostrophe, image to anecdote. Always the impulse towards song creates momentum, thrust, which the formal demand for economy and compression keeps under control. Thus the peculiar tension and impact of the form.

Many of these poems deal with the subject of male-female relationships, a useful metaphor for exploring the mysterious process of the discovery of self by way of the tortuous journey in and out of love, but also for examining the inevitable relationship between power and value in the body politic. Other poems touch upon the interconnectedness of man and the natural world, and ways in which this 'contract' has been broken.

A Song For Solomon

My strength
has turned to cinders
by a lady's touch.

What will they say
in taverns where sailors

display their conquests
With tatoos?

My hair is thin,
my beard languishes
like a napkin
on my sunken chest.

What will the congregation
whisper, when the priest
drones the message
"dust" to dust"

and all that remains
of me is good intentions
and a tattered coat?

O solomon,
O solemn man
where have you gone?

Viens icitte!

Come I will show you
a secret place, where
men, drunk with the perfume
of their ladies, have
lost their taste for whisky

and ignore the girl
dancing in the air above them
who descends occasionally
to pull a whisker from their beards.

Girl With Carrot

The girl who brings me
carrot juice in the restaurant
must never grow old.

I will advertise her beauty
in the press, serve up her smile
to crazy customers.

As long as yogurt lives,
and apple crisp, my songs
will wait upon her faithfully.

Downtown Daedalus

Lost, amazed,
amidst a labyrinth
of concrete

we grew bored.
First, we waxed
eloquent; finally,
nothing could hold
us down.

One by one
the feathers
dropped from our wings;
our egos
drained of helium.

Then we were moving
downstream, cold water
flowing into the spaces
of a vast sea.

Quelle douche!

Noctambule

Only now I hear
the flutes
of lonely women calling.

I have served them
in their loose white gowns,
and my heart has pounded
to their holy music.

The scent of their hair
frolics in my nostrils;
their breath
is my monsoon season.

Black Sabbath

Drunk as we were
our voices deep

and coloured from the night

we lay among the fronds
and bathed.

Portrait Of The Artist As A Fool

How your eyes
beckon me,
how moonlight fills your hair
exactly where I put it!

I hear your call
in the wind. Traces of light
betray your presence
floating on black waters.
Would you have turned back
if you had seen me
in the deeps below
reaching out from swaying fronds?

If things go on like this
for long, we'll both
be framed.

Forecast

Each by each
the new clouds
come together for a moment,

and virgin gods go
back into the sky.

Below the rays
of thinning light
a young woman
inches through the slums,

leaving fragments
of her heart behind.

Third World

What shall I say to amuse them?
A cobbler in words,
I have worn out my tongues,
am no longer a mender of souls.
This anguish is the last
I break my head upon.

Let the poor sleep in their fine
skins, their elegant bones
so prominent and frail.
Let them crack and scatter
in a thousand salutations.

I will surrender my tools,
lie down among the wheat stalks
thankful for the harvest.

Frankly

Tell me what you feel
and what you see
in my face. Our deep
eyes conjure many colours
and there are tears enough
for all the nights to come.

A Simple Calm

Your eyes speak
a simple calm;
there is no storm
in your body. So
I will not be crushed;
neither will I kiss
the chaos that breaks
against your flesh.

Listen, if I were
to become a snow man
drawing you to myself
with a frozen broom
that carries no truth,
would you call me pagan?

The Citizens Of Insomnia

Stir my coffee
with the fingers of gypsies
and I will sell you my heart
for a cup of madness.

Let them be our governors,
place their cats
in the highest office.

Your dress is a garden
of flowers. Let's not
delay the picnic.

In the beginning

I feel your
silence, taste
salt in your tears.
Your lips dispell
the folly of words.
You are fine wine;
your presence drops
about me like manna.

The sun drinks dew
from your hair,
all nature is drunk
with your perfume.
Hills rise to greet
your flesh; stars
journey across galaxies
to celebrate this birth.

The Night Is A Beautiful Woman

Darkness entered
the room; like a woman
in full sail.

I was suddenly
adrift, swept away.
Something passed close
by; they stretched
me on the deck
to dry.

She dropped
her garments about me;
our lips touched gently
and we slept.

Awakening

How did you place
that image in my thoughts
that worked like acid
on my prejudice, my
seclusion?

I move on
naked
among the voices
of drunken fools,
through crowds, streets,
flying
faster and faster
beyond the limits of my flesh,
love engraved
upon my face.

Departures

Our smiles come and go
like passing trains

that whistle the time
of departures

and leave cold smoke
upon the tracks.

Above the balcony
the locomotive sun

shunts reluctant clouds
westward.

Sins we managed to achieve

Life needs a feather
from a good friend's beard
for consolation

running like spring water
down from the mountain,
down from a lover

but it needs a short death too,
the old white ram burning
in the fire to atone for
sins we managed to achieve.

For, when we lose our bride,
the long black feathers
flutter away like seeds
scattered in a garden.

But life does not
end here, my sister;
it goes on whistling,
a train
in the cold distance.

New beards will grow
like leaves in due time
and we will touch
another's waiting flesh.

Shanty

I think I see you
among the crowd
with mermaids
bathing in the sun.

Image swims with image
and so our bodies
come together for a time.

The light must change,
the crowd disperse,
but still my breath
can shape your hair
and the sun befriend the waves.

A Love Song To You

Let us sing and dance
and roll in the dust.

Outside the drunken wind
laughs, toasts doors
and windows.

Let me drown -
in the wisdom of your lips.

The waitress will clear us away.

Hey, Give me Back My Image!

I never noticed
the masks or faces
flattened under nylons

but strange enough
my outlaw friends
coralled me on the landing
at Langley Hall,
shooting from the hip
with cameras,

and went laughing
up the stairs
to new developments

clutching their loot.

Our Journey Together

She is within me
and beyond, piercing night,
making the day
break.

She is
the ark
on which
we voyage
to new lands,
new encounters.

Compassion is the woman
I speak of.
She inhabits me,
renews me
a thousand ways.

Alchemy

Love alone
will make us new,

make us travel
strange, dark roads.

Think that the end
will never come;

think when the last breath
is given, we'll become

wide-winged eagles
in our nest.

Last Exit

This is it, her final
breath, an inspiration.

So she makes ready,
packing the years, the fury.

Tears of elegy
burn my face.

MASQUERADE

What girls are these
that dance about me

attending the rhythm
of my steps? Do they
think me a skier,
a lover of snow?

What will I do
when they remove white

slippers, and I inhale again
the fragrance of leaves?

Eclipse

Ex-lover of the moon,
you lie beside me

sleeping. Who was it
told you I would wait?

Did they also warn
you of my milky ways?

Not to tell a lie

makes you the splendour
of many suns,

makes you low as fishes
in the sea,

or so godlike
you can stop the rain

from falling on us
where we lie.

The Source

Clouds stretch heavy
across the sky,
but the sun is here
beside us in the bedroom
while we sleep.

Some day we will
gaze from the windows
of passing trains,
until our flesh becomes
a broken metaphor,
and our sunward souls
rise up like birds.

Inspiration

From out of dead
waters, as from a tomb,
I carried you.

Over fields, from
swamp to dry land,
set you down/
beside this burning
hearth.

* When at last I caught
my breath,
I gave it to you.

NIGHT-MER

Green mermaids
serve us coffee
in our dreams.

We horse around
awhile and ask them
for their names

afraid they'll answer.

This Is an Emergency

I am stretched low on bed,
my heart a broken
conveyor-belt.
In a moment
I will abandon consciousness
-is it mine or yours?
My cigar will burn
to its butt-end.
My feet will write poems
on the street in blood.

This time, they'll remove it
once and for all.

EROS AMONG THE MEATBALLS

Spaghetti,
home made
sausages & olives:

Fork turning
in spoon,
lips pursed
before this spread.

Kite

Give
me the sigh
of a child who can
wash the wounds of his father.

His love grows wings, lifts
me above doubt, anxiety,
yet it's a cable too,
a string that
anchors
me to

e
a
r
t
h

Measures

Robert and Francine
follow us to the restaurant
past crowds of passersby,
tapping a white cane
upon the cobble stones and bricks.
Tapping out a rhythm,
a poem; they are happier
than I have ever seen them.
Our forks pick up the beat
as we bend to lasagna,
eating together among friends.

Long Years of Combat

I have seen
my hair turn
to yellow, my beard,
lengthen as the years.

I am battle-weary,
my feet wet with blood.
Never have I seen
such floods before.

I am
a shipwrecked
mariner. I will drown
in the reflections
of a dim grey sky.

Moments of Darkness

Clouds settle
like toads
upon our hearts.

Our hearts inhabit
the darkness
of caves.

In the next world,
we will dream
in technicolour.

Home Brew

Womansong enters, slips
its warm tongue in my ear,

looks once about the room
and laughs
at the secrets of wine.

Voices stir me, begin
the ancient ferment.

Early One Morning

Early one morning
an eagle raised me up,
her great wings
carving our secrets
in the wind. Our hearts
fluttered in the space behind.

Was I your lover,
could I still hold on?

After the passing of the feathered gods
I burst out into the streets
beating the air
that had betrayed me.

Indiscretion, my only wound.

dawn

comes early
tongues
my coffee
its cool hands
touching new-
born ears, making
the flesh
word

comes feathered
stretching, arrowing
in, wounding
me to life

A Cigar With Our Teachers

Waxed and feathered
our wings lend us courage,
lift us above the authorities--
some mechanical process,
some strict school-master.

We light cigars,
blow smoke in their faces.
But the illumination,
the heat, are
always a let-down.

Gossip Is A Washer Woman

Gossip is a washer woman
ruffling her dress,
making the dust
circle around us.
See how the people
dance to her teasing,
the coxcomb-web,
some tale of a vagabond
or a hunter's device,
some busy occupant
between our seats.

Then it rises again
and trembles to see
how I follow you steadily
up the stairs.

It laughs and bursts
like a circus clown,
climbs to my ear
and whispers
an odd musical note.

The Heart Of The Vagabond

I am
infinitely fleeing
my heart's long journey,

infinitely wondering
where love will lead,
sailing
among fish of tropic waters,

sailing also
into strange archipelagos.

This is the mystery.
Give me purchase, give
me latitude.

A Belly Laugh From Jonah

My agony was greater
than a whale
the day our love
sounded.

A sperm whale!

The Geranium's Final Confession

The sun is beating
my heart red and strong.
I bathe in the silence
of your eyes,
and my soul is drunk.

You sell my cuttings
to passers-by;
your hand stretches out
to reach me
and I drown.

Don't Give Me The Brush

Time is still
a street cleaner,
though its brushes
spin in circles now.

Sooner or later
I'll have to move my butt.

Blind Pride

Virgins await
your love. Night falls
so soon. You never see them
waiting, in the darkness
as you pass.

On Our Way To Lacolle

Look at the way
we drive through
the countryside
like sunshine slicing
through rain.

Dying leaves
look up and forgive
us our happiness;
naked trees
stand back to let us pass.

Growing Old

Come again
but do not kiss.
Time glides through
the air like a young
raven, its wings
brushing our lips.

So this is age, at last.
The summer flowers
explode with colour,
daring the approach
of autumn, all
stops pukled.

Straw Man

My young raven
will not sing to me
again, bring music
to my flute.

The nest she made
in my heart
is picked clean
by the wind.

Tall Angels

Letters are the tall
angels that speak
to us in private.

If our shadows were
pinned against the clouds
and we prayed for mercy
from the heavens,
we could still not stop
all the rain from falling
on the postman's head.

Besides, we have all the cups
and spoons to think about.

Love's Long Journey

It was
only the wind passing
gathering leaves,
gathering lovers.
The sun smiles to the palms,
the quiet sound
of waves.

Her hair straw
brown, resplendent;
a maiden's wine
stolen
from beneath night pillows.

Old time sits among the gods
consuming our minutes.
The hours spin past on two wheels.
Swallows huddle
whispering of Acteon;
brave eagles
take to the sky.

Will there be time enough
to talk
under the sun, the clouds?

A Knight In August

The night lays
a granite question
on my tongue,
strings my pillow
with the laughter
of women.

My armour
turns to clay,
my words
are as dust.
My image burns
in the flames
of your hair.

I am martyr
of strumpets.
Bury my heart
in the winds
of August.

Waiting For The Fall

Tell the yellow leaves that
shiver in their white old age
to wait a little longer;
tell them we'll take
a picture of them all
to give us hope in winter.
If that's not enough
give up, and play the rake.

Chris' Birthday At Belmore

Our voices blend
like Sombreros-
Tia Maria and Milk
over ice.
Tongues fatten,
grow generous
with words, affections.

The cake gleams
like an ancient
salutation. Come
let us feast ourselves!

Barometer falling

Circe, Circe,
your stern look
shook like a tempest.

Secured to my mast,

Was I shipwrecked
then, or when we
both went overboard?

Omega

Remember how
we once drank
from the last straw?

How long it took
to drain our portion
to the dregs!

Heat

I drift further
afield in the wake
of an old white
blizzard. Drunken voices
reach me from the Lacolle
farm house and I begin,
at last, to shiver.

Why do I feel alone
in a universe without poems,
or in a poem without love?

Hard Times

Life nags us,
wife-weary,
into the nearest tavern
where, for the price
of a few beers, our souls
grow fat. There is
no home on the horizon,
only the promised land
of cool alleys
and discarded newspapers.

Night Music

Night music
melting the child,
the innocent laughter.

Dew dries
on the naked branches.
The minutes, hours,
the evening cup of tea.

Which birth is real,
which the greater
celebration?

The seeds,
assorted berries
that grow in his heart.
And the wisdom
sprouting on his face.

My Sun

When I expose
myself to you,
you lay
a medal of the ages
on my skin, dark
with ancient stirrings
and intent.

Still I wait to receive you,
my sun, where the silence
of noon-tide
breaks against my craft.

Stand-off, if
stand you must.
Old winds
will teach your secrets.

Sugaring

This is the sugaring
season. Strange words,
flavoured and exotic,
seep from the roots
of my hair.

Incarnation

It seems, at times,
when everything
is breaking up around us,
we need to fly
on gull's back
over strange waters.

The phoenix
will soon arrive
with songs of fire
that inflame my horses,
make them bold
to lift imagination
above the woods, the clouds,
to where all things
begin anew.

I know my progeny will come too,
give me a new identity
and a new name.

That Girl Cyndercind

Let the rain fall,
let leaves lie in the field
and trees look skyward
in their age.

Where is the girl
who rises with the sun?

O she is better
than a sparrow's wing
that longs to shape
the summer sky.

Gifts

If you take my words
as Christmas gifts

colours will light up
in old Jerusalem.