

Patrice

(Thanks to Cocteau's "The Eternal Return" based on Tristan & Isolde)

Beyond being golden, an Aryan
innocence made rare...
Beyond woods, fields, the untellable
pastoral to which you brought me
over waves, the graves of parents...
I knew, like a sleepwalker I knew
the dream of our days
would be shaken & torn...

First a drunkard's tempest came:
the furious cognac flung to smash behind my head,
his knuckles on the skull, twisting hair,
pressing down, my face mopping
spilled liquor 'til you stepped in.
Patrice, even then I knew
to escape would prove fatal,
though still I yearned, still I went along.

Next there was an elixir, a love potion, the good intentions
of a friend twisted malevolently
by the dwarf, Achilles', unknowing fingers....
What of it, our luck, since it wasn't poison
though that's what the bottle
prescribed?

It might as well have been, & us,
victims still, fortunate for the spell
we would have felt anyway.

How on earth to escape this----
when you meant me for your Uncle,
when I signed that contract & its dangerous
terrain-----
Two houses in one dwelling, a castle of cards
where the Queens looked away, & then privately
plotting, with menace, looked on?

So we ran away, we ran never planning,
we ran & I remember...
I remember your hands in the warmth of evening

mist, the pond lapping, the frogs...& I remember
your bird call, the signal I woke to, delirious
on the mountain where my husband Marc,
Your uncle, came after, came after...

Abandonment, betrayal-----
Who but I could do it...
Going, going back as if hog-tied,
broken, your whisper now the seas'
breath imprinting my mouth?

For a month I felt it, hearing, bed-bound,
a nightingale's song. Was it you?
I was moved to different windows
& the walls of the rooms sealed me up
like a shot glass.

Drunk, I drowned
& the business left only one
reprieve: to go where, wounded,
you lay, the torment at last still,
& gladly, for I am glad,
shipwrecked,
lie down.

Patrice, sleep well. Your Natalie,
like your parents, like mine,
is here & is finished.

(mp3 as song-soundscape only, not in print)