

Leonard Nolens

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Translation Dutch into English
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Epitaph

I have a love who's as old as my self.
She cannot die as long as I'm not dead.

She so likes being burdened by my name.
She publishes my flesh and blood till it's all gone.

She hawks outdated news of me around the world
And blindly sorts the lines I never understood.

I have a love, she's always in danger
And can only leave when I don't know the way.

The road that we are on, we roll it slowly up
Into a stone. We'll lay it one day on our grave.

I

Today five billion people said I
With a kiss, a razor blade, a plate of spaghetti, a shot.
It made a diFERENCE to me. It made me five billion times I.
We call that reality. It has no name.

Last night five billion people cried you.
In letters, in the street, in pubs, in beds, on bridges.
It made a diFERENCE to me. It made me five billion.
We call that world. The world. It has no name.

But I am it. I'm it five billion times.
The world is always five billion times I.
Reality is always five billion.
Today five billion people said me.

Love's banks

Taking distance and leave is the horny metaphysics
Of men who keep their love hot and moist
In a far-oF spot, and so cook their days.
Leaving, slamming doors, is the pure zealotry
Of women who have swallowed their lovers
And make their swelling bodies into sheer religion.

I know those two, they are alone, but for each other.
They have time, the same one, but on grounds that diFer
Like that banks of that one widespread stream.
In that water they lie abysmally reflected
Viewing the passing, passing the view.
And not a soul who knows what has got into them both.

Paranoia

They say that poets should keep their tongue in check.
They, they are the fashion journalists who slate my clothes
And tomorrow wear my designs. They are the kitchen inspectors
Who sup on my flesh and spit in my pans.
They are the weed killers and dead doctors of poetry.
But who has clothed the naked and fed the hungry?

No, the tongue you have stained on your slides is also mine
And what you is actually pretty pathetic.
Your metrical jackets and rhyming britches, count me out.
Your salt-free sonnet snapshots, excuse me, no, merci.

I can't help it, the sublimest prosody
Comes from the guts, ultimately every soul thinks intestinally
(Unlike my capital letter, here she comes:
She is the c clef of my horizontal staves.)

Perhaps this charms or startles. It wasn't meant to.
Many of these lines are hammered together with malice and hate.
Even with good intentions, my road leads to hell.
If you suffer you go to hell, there's no percentage in pain.

Words, seed and cents were made to spend freely.
Never put them in the savings book of the evident form.
The deepest form is in the fellow's rhythm poetry
With balls, therefore, as Pavese said, and he gulped his death.

The poet to himself

Go on, just you try, unclothe me
To the bone, I'll remain the final cut
Of your suit, the rested rectangle
Of your bed, your handiest form of hope.

And you, you're nothing but a glimpse
Of me, oh you, my chain-smoking shadow
Between two trains, my moaning phantom

With suitcases, you, my hobbling ghost
Who will wash away through the slow revolving door
Of a derelict station.

Go on, just you try, forget me,
My friend, my frank absent slave.
I am your whip, you bleed from my hours.
I am your work and you are my servant.

To whom it may concern

I've brought you with me to this halfway-house.

The loft's abuzz with voices like a hive.

Hatred and love help swell the honeycombs

With the poems to be consumed elsewhere.

Thus I portray, poison and antidote, transformed,

What I've purloined from you, a little world

Paid for with my capture of your mystery.

Only you gain freedom here in black and white.

So read me. Read me in full or not at all.

This was my wish, I'd not do this alone,

I wanted to speak, here, on everyone's behalf.

Am I a bottle at sea, a sermon in the dark?

I was still young, I dreamt that I appeared here

Like one walking singing over yonder hills.

I dreamt I wrote like a dead man speaks

With all the gift of tongues his absence brings.

Tributary

She sleeps and all is still. Snow falls in the rooms
Of the house I live in with my lover.
She lies there naked, white, a breathing stone,
A large and tiresome statue I can't help bumping into,
A harsh weight that I must carry every day,
Every night that her sleep keeps me awake.

I am alone with her. Only with her do I
Make it down the years, since her name shows me the way
And in her eyes I see my blind time reflected.
She lies there naked, white, a breathing stone
On which I have whetted my whole blunt existence
And do still, even when I sleep and call to her in dreams.

Verklärte nacht

We are sitting naked at table. Your eyes light up the room.
Luminescent, your butterfly hands stir the air as you speak
To me, or quiet in sleep on the black cloth remain.

I touch them every day. Their lifelines know my name.
Their transparent veins conceal the course of my fate, the beat
Of our blood that changes the white of your cheeks to desire's mottled
bloom.

The back door blows open. The first drops of rain rustle through
The trees, sprinkling the wind-shaken window in which you sit glowing,
A light which shows me myself, into whom I may fade and pass.

You pile up the plates, brush the crumbs off and fill up my glass.
From the kitchen I hear the clink of knives and blue porcelain echoing,
Far off. My legs are aching with not being able to go to you.

We were the silent ones after May forty-five (fragment)

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We were many then, people like me.
We did not lie athwart in mother.
We lay on father's top shelf.
We lay on nobody's stomach.
We lay well placed in the gap in the market.
We lay in the distance.
We lay back and liked each other.

We, people like me, were many then.
We were not a fleeting photo.
We were not a dissolving crowd.
We were not casual beings.
We lived in austere houses
Of stone, central cogitation.
We were our own expectation.

We were, many of us, like then, me,
And temperament was no curse.
Personality not yet a stigma.
The sexual nature of texts
And gods was still not a scandal.
We were on first-name terms
And every first name was me.