

from CELTIQUES

Dedication

Poems addressed to one are meant for all
For otherwise they'd best remain unknown
Yet *person* has a meaning of its own
I speak to *you*, a universe made small
In concentration of imagination
What images flash by me as I write
Like headlights on a highway in the night
Cannot tempt me away from my vocation

I stand before you with my book in hand
And search for words to make you understand
My gift to you is its own compensation
Your beauty offers an analogy
In praising it I build no equity
But seek fraternity in admiration

First Episode

1

We cannot love whom we have never met
But we can worship beauty from afar
Decoupled from the mortals that we are
The more when it in mortal flesh is set
Why is one look the sovereign of all
When any could perpetuate the race
Yet in the crowd of damsels but one face
Is worthy to be watched and to recall

Why are you beautiful and others not
This is no mere Darwinian selection
There is a deeper sense to your perfection
Beyond what makes the senses' fire run hot
To other forms forget and yours retain
Assures we seek the sacred not in vain

2

I beg your pardon in advance
That I cannot deserve your smile
To see your beauty so beguile
One lost in age and circumstance
To watch you gliding back and forth
Imbibing the unvarnished grace
That shines from your unpainted face
Pays far more than my day is worth

I write these lines to you for I
Can offer only reverence
There is no proper recompense
To know the Eden of your eye
And of your lips whose smile on me
Intimates immortality

3

How precious that you recognize
I want alone for you to *be*
And now and then to let me see
The sight but you can realize
To show me with a gentle smile
That my poor homage brings you joy
When others labor to destroy
The lives of poets they beguile

To my eye clear of irony
Your beauty is a sacrament
Beholding it my sole intent
To capture it in poetry
Whose words would humbly recompense
Your blessing on my reverence

The Muse

—Dear Goldfarb have you found at last
 A creature purer than your Muse
 To whom the light of reason's ruse
 Informs you that your soul be passed
 Seeing upon a face unnamed
 The sign of God's undoubted grace
 As if no flesh beyond that face
 Could be imagined unashamed

'Twas not this love our parents knew
 In Eden's garden long ago
 Nor what the Fall has made us know
 Eros' sad ecstasy in blue
 When beauty's form alone remains
 An angel's smile relieves love's pains
 —But signs are false as well as true

The poet replies

As I have learned to my dismay
 And as I should have known with you
 The lyric poet's lot's to rue
 All license granted to betray
 While knowing, if his care be true,
 He gives more happiness to stay
 His urge to end the long delay
 And make of verse a way to woo

I'll navigate the liquid space
 Between my vision and her face
 And never seek to come ashore
 To make her eye my only sign
 And for the rest with joy resign
 To steer by this and nothing more

6

How can I ask one I know not
Save in her day's banality
To take responsibility
For the nocturnal honeypot
That poets seek and rarely find
Beyond the rainbow of their hope:
To know at last the master trope
Whose dazzle drove poor Homer blind

There's no poetics of the All
Our little corner's all we have
And no one's smile our soul can save
And turn it back from Eden's fall
I can but modestly revere
The one whose blessing brings me here

7

Have I now seen the angel's smile
That means at last I am at home
That now the eve of death has come
Upon a life lived in exile
Should I now tell my people's tales
Without the prosthesis of rhyme
To leave the world to its own time
And not redeem it if it fails

Is this too much to ask of one
Whose eye bequeaths a spark of grace
To one who occupied no space
Upon the land beneath the sun
Or might she happily partake
The timeless time that poets make

—You see it one more time my dear
 I am your Muse and I alone
 These pretty girls you call your own
 On grounds increasingly unclear
 Whether they pay you compliments
 Or simply greet you with a smile
 You find your life at last worthwhile
 And build for them great monuments

I understand your nagging need
 To seek a sign in earthly guise
 That promises you Paradise
 And serves your sonnets as their seed
 But you should know to not confuse
 These fleeting pretexts with your Muse

—Dear Goldfarb please don't think me unconcerned
 I know your garden answers the imperative
 To fix upon an objective correlative
 For lack of which its soil remains unturned
 A poet cannot write without a belle
 Though in the flesh I'm beautiful enough
 To give my bard a chance to do his stuff
 As spirit I'm like Jello that won't jell

So by all means seek beauty where you must
 However paper-thin your friendship be
 For you will never find another me
 —Ah, had you kept your secret from my trust
 I'd have remained your Muse in life as well
 And you'd have had far sweeter tales to tell