

Elegium Catullus/Corso

for Allen Ginsberg

Every night of our youth
was One last gaudy night
in and out many palships,
admonishments:
Don't drink, screw up poetry readings
I am sitting buddha-style by your coffin of gold
my yiddishe grandma, here I am
for this final parting
to bestow at last these words which the dead are given
to eulogize
and mourn in vain your unspeaking ashes
since rigid Fortune forbids you to hear me or answer
O my blessed brother so abruptly taken
I celebrate my grief with funeral tributes
offered the dead in the ancient way of your choice
accept these words, wet with my brotherly tears, and
now and forever, my brother,
as your last words were to me on the phone
I return to you
toodle loo!

“weird traces of light...”

weird traces of light like inverted shadows
disc the air where my fingers picked something up
& boomerang where my elbow dropped itself
could be tired as the time could tell
though i have kept these hours long & lively
for reasons lonely & vain
mostly sad like the fat woman trying to fit in her dress
we are both attempting beautiful conversation in our minds
& i wonder how long it lasts
we question it w/ all the right answers, forever?
I am sick at the thought of catching up w/ them
like they were right all along
everyone exactly the same & entirely content
why is it so binding?
why are the silken strings stretched about me so?
if you are so inclined, cut yourself
& tell me if your pain is identical
go ahead & stuff the gash w/ linen
be a mary magdalene redeemed
the eyes will kindle the atmosphere
spacey sounds your eyes perceive audibly
headaches & whoredoms clothed in christ
that was no trap door
nor false panel
my distortion is honest as a drum
i am sorry for the changing graces they give us
absolutely brokenhearted that she doesn't stand near me
her skirt was patchwork like my quilt
in an hour or less i'll be underneath
remembering she slept on my bed once
imagining things differently until
it all bends like memory into another day

3/22/98 4:07 am

“I am frighteningly lost in the present...”

I am frighteningly lost in the present
I cannot hurry from the house
and go see my dearest friend
—he died not long ago
There’s my mother
she’s vowed to care for me
but I don’t know her
After 67 years of life
I’ve finally met her
—she lives far away in New Jersey
I don’t know what to do in the street
where to go...
People, life—all different
I hardly know anyone
The old hangouts, some gone, others: strangers

I cry sometimes for my dead friends
sometimes for no reason
I feel wracked with guilt
guilt for some unknown sin
perhaps never committed
It wasn’t so much I failed my friends
but myself
It was only later by harsh realization
that these friends were god-blessed
After a loveless life
these angels without wings loved me
Ignorant of love, confused,
I was not aware of my destiny
Did God command: “Go, go love the unloved one”

It took a year
and the many deaths during that year
to end the life I was long accustomed to—

This new life
bereft of all things familiar
seems as though I had died
and then came right back to life
to a world unknown to me—

“This is an autobio...”

This is an autobio
I suggest you read
In one sitting how poetry
first came to me—
In time you’ll notice
I’m duadic; I’ve voices two
They’re easy to distinguish
My profile at left is unlike the one at right
I feel I’ve an encyclopediac
as well as prophetic Janusian mask
beneath my face
The face I see and all else see
is the true mask—
No one knows the Janus beneath
People believe the mask covers the face
yet impossible it is for them to unmask that mask of flesh
It is Janus brings the glow to your face
You can’t confide with Janus in the mirror
the way my dear Buddhist friend advises
Sayeth he, Meditate, say hi! to your face
regard your eyes, whisper: Janus...O Janus....

“I was born 1930...”

I was born 1930
It is now 1997
I am 67
I was born a poet
An orphan since birth
I lived alone
The foster homes I was shipped out to
kept me in single locked rooms
My friends were crayons and paper
and my imagination
I wrote my first poem
never having heard the word poetry
I was my best friend
I wrote to myself
mostly my dreams
and imaginings

I read my first book
a gangster book
in the Tombs age 13

I lived on the streets until 15
I spent 6 months in Windsor Prison, VT
read *Les Miserables* there

Spent three months free
and was sent back to prison
Clinton at Dannemora
Plattsburgh, New York,
for 2 ½ to 3 years...
there I read all the books I could get my hands on
and endlessly wrote to myself
It really wasn't myself I was writing to
it was the world; I was writing to the world
—that's why I called them poems
and had them published—

“And because the cause of it...”

And because the cause of it
had to do with Faith and Knowledge
I put on the self-brakes
realizing I was in my years
and to see if I was mentally responsible—

Not of my making
but I sense I’m accountable...
By thought alone
cemented in logos
one’s able to tip the balance...
what proof the imbalance?
Right or wrong must one press down?

Change
there’s always change
and no change in itself is change

I know what was my crime
but now
what is my crime now?
Hubris, it has to do with hubris—

Who has the choice
to prepare for remission?
The chances of living are 2 to 1 against me
I am a doctor of heart idiosyncrasies
I know the body can destroy malignancy
My heart is an ongoing mystery
Pull out the cannons!
I’m either gonna kill myself or kill the ill
All’s spontaneous remission with me
I’ll never know why I get well
and believe me I’m a mess—