

LOVE,  
ABSTRACTION  
*AND*  
OTHER SPECULATIONS

*By Phillip Pulfrey*

**A** shabby teller of tales,  
for a while recounting beauties,  
Keep reality from your eyes:  
‘Love’, I whisper, and content in this deceiving,  
You ignore my raggedness.

**F**resh sensation nudges complacency:  
*The first primrose forgiving winter;*  
*A cheek surprised by a whisper of warmth*  
*Contradicting the cold air;*  
*You- touching a vibration somewhere,*  
*Like a dream, not quite remembered*  
*Yet haunting the whole day.*

*Your eyes are very beautiful;  
The corner of your mouth deserves kisses and  
Your smile is a big, red balloon inside me  
Seeking an open window in this house of reason  
To float up and towards you-*

*Weary words, 'I love you',  
Yet you magic me out-of-the-ordinary  
Into worlds where everything is fresh created lovely  
and the ice-frost queen of cynicism and the weary  
cannot petrify the laughter of birds  
and one, chaste kiss is newness  
out-performing the fastest car.*

*'PERHAPSYOUHAVEALREADYLEARNTTOFLY'*

*Perhaps you have already learnt to fly,  
And the slenderest possibility of a glance  
Has brought pounding drums and mystic fire-  
Or, even, the familiar reassurance of oft known gesture  
Has stolen deliciously over you with full contentment.  
Perhaps you have joined already the eternal daunsynge;  
For you are old enough to tear me between heaven and damnation  
And send me a-seeking once again  
In the burning pain of your sweetness.*

*Across these oceans of impossible separation  
I hear you whisper-  
"Don't you desire again to suffer?  
How else can you define this journey through time,  
To enter, momentarily, the sublime?  
Cast off gravity though a fleeting memory of the divine  
Which will damn you ever with its remembrance!"*

*You stir in me the love of stars,  
The earthbound longing for the unattainable;  
A familiar burning  
Echoing the first anguished contemplation  
of this condition:  
Mortal angels wings stirred with memories,  
Half-remembered visions of human possibility  
Reflected in pure divinity  
That made, then, acute the burden of mere Reality-*

*Older now, love brings a gentler contemplation;  
Unexpected childlike joy,  
Unsought and inappropriate.*

#### *CONFESSION*

*My first kiss is given  
and the complexity of my innocent passion spent;  
I have already gazed upon stars and been proved a liar  
and have miserably failed to comprehend eternity;  
From morning to evening my humours change  
and my intentions are easily mislaid in pretty eyes.  
Yet I wait upon Keat's Third Chamber  
and, being no longer deceived in myself,  
Hope to offer you a truer Love-*

*CLASSICISM*

*Falling in Love comes easy,  
Staying in Love is an Art;  
Requiring faith and dedication,  
Patient work in hours when inspiration  
And vision are lost in mundane task-*

*ROMANTICISM*

*Poor mollusc*

*I pity you your shell*

*Out-surviving your ability to feel:*

*I should rather die of love*

*Than to survive without giving all*



*A LOVE STORY, IN THREE CHAPTERS:*

*ANNE*

*Thinking of you*

*One tear forms*

*Of itself-*

*Itself a thousand poems*

*In whose presence*

*Words may only dance.*

11

*De la puissance de mes rêves  
Et la faiblesse de mon humanité,  
De la grandeur de mes intentions  
Et la pauvreté de mes capacités,  
Je t'aime.*

*Et entre ce que je peux et ce que je veux  
Tranquillement, l'amour se nourrit.*

111

*My heart will not, I think, break again:  
So much love exuded  
To achieve my own extinction only.  
A desiccation in a deserted landscape  
Where my waters seem insufficient,  
Leaving me no further oasis.*

*Knowledge does not educate the first incomprehension of Love.*

*No articulation is defense against the overwhelming of this mystery;*

*Unfamiliar and raw senses drown all consideration*

*In a moment's glimpse of the Absolute which, even gentlest mockery,*

*We cannot bear. The only fulfilment is our destruction*

*In the consummation of this purifying fire.*

**L**ike a tourist in a cathedral,  
Inappropriate and inadequate,  
Bearing my shabby love, I stand and contemplate  
Before this beauty; piercing and confusing,  
Destroying with such gentle cruelty  
All the certainties and ambitions of self.

*This house I constructed carefully and with consideration;  
Learning painful lessons of feeling,  
Circumscribing my expectations to human limits.  
Yet, the merest tremor,  
A moment's electricity between the touch of fingers-  
This only, the lightest laughter of the gods,  
Was enough destruction-*

*I am homeless again.*

*I could write  
You  
A thousand poems  
And say  
Nothing  
A kiss wouldn't cure.*

*It is so different from all expectation,  
Costing so much;  
The giving up of all pretension,  
The painful casting off of the delusion  
We thought to be ourself.*

*It is nothing to speak of-  
A warm fulfilment in her presence,  
A final completion in renunciation.*

*MEPHOSTOPHILIS*

*You have taken my soul  
And ripped it in two,  
Setting my house against itself.  
Filling me with You  
As an alternative to me-*

*FRANKENSTEIN*

*Human kind cannot stand much reality;  
We prefer to love each other in the mind.  
Thus pressed together with the trivia  
Of a thousand tiny preferences,  
We find ourselves betrayed by a gesture,  
(it was not what we desired)  
And with a few deft strokes, this other  
Reworks beyond recognition  
Our jealous creation.*

*Within this intimacy of taking tea,  
Close amid surrounding strangers  
You sit opposite me-  
Transfixed in your own reality.*

*With fear and flowers  
I approach the boundary of your silence  
Hoping to transcend this limitation.*

*Seeking to abandon the responsibility of self,  
Sparks kindle on hope across the alien room:  
Underneath the layered desires, it comes to this;  
‘Take me for myself’.  
Teddy bears, gods and lovers; abstracted selves  
Forever dealt the heavy death blow of reality  
In which we must drown or construct  
Games, masks and images.*



*WEAVERS*

*A thousand tiny intonations  
Criss-crossing in pastel shades  
To make up this delicate pattern;  
Moods and feelings  
Interpreted, understood  
And misunderstood.  
Each word perfects  
Or destroys a pattern-  
It is our lot  
To weave continuously,  
Trying ceaselessly  
To complete a design-*

*KALEIDOSCOPE*

*A shake of coloured glass.  
A one-eyed glimpse down a cardboard tube;  
Unstable beauty already moved  
When I pass to you this creation.  
Our conversation hampered by subtle shifts in perception,  
Mere toys that we do not comprehend-  
Too seriously taken structures  
Within which we find ourselves imprisoned.*

*PEACH*

*Tip-toe: do not bruise,  
With your heavy-handed unconscious  
Touch. Deforming perfection palpably  
In this enthusiastic embrace  
Marking its own fated disappointment  
And confusing sensitivity with brutality.*

*RARE ORCHIDS*

*A contradiction to both savageness and civilization,  
A delicate flowering of nature's wildest places  
Woven into moment by transience and contrast  
For those willing to risk discomfort and danger;  
An essence eluding hot-house and grafting.  
While plucked from the wild they wither  
    in domestic jam-jars.*

*Shy tourist on your beaches,  
The vast and unknown of your continent  
Feeds restlessness and dreams;  
Nurturing fearless and impassioned voyages  
To the secret of your interior.  
While I lazily sun myself and sip  
Embarking only armchair exploits.*

*If Romeo had not died,  
Would he have regretted his parted youth  
And, glancing at his reproachful Juliet,  
Remembered wistfully that other love?*

abstractions

1.

*Perfection is a concept, not a reality  
And so in search for perfection I search  
For the end of my reality.  
I seek to become the bond of unity  
Which denies my right to individuality.  
I seek to pass from individuality to conception.*

11.

*Life struggles to give up struggling,  
To reach a plain of perfection  
Where desire has no meaning-  
Life struggles towards death,  
And so the individual  
Seeks to lose individuality,  
To lose his right to will;  
To become a unity.*

111.

*Existing somewhere  
Between abstract and particular being;  
Caught between innocence and purity  
The soul yearns completion  
In the aspiration of greater understanding,  
But yet desiring absolution  
From the responsibility of existence  
And in the mystery of Love  
Seeks to reconcile both these conditions.*

**A** *dialectic of form and content-  
An ancient debate as old as culture;  
Life reduced to engagement,  
Subjecting mind and body  
To hazard of experience and decision.  
Or else a quixotic faith  
Beyond reason.*

*HAIKU*

*Two waves complete their destiny;  
In the North a leaf dies-  
In man's arrogance the hours lie heavy  
And Angels weep to see God's impassiveness.*

**D**o and unperturbable the blue waters,  
While the fish swims  
Still unknowing-.



*'TOO MUCH THINKING MAKES THEM STUPID'*

*I seem to exist on the lapping edge of reality*

*And make no sense of it-*

*Immersed, one is occupied in swimming,*

*Yet here, idly watching the waters between my toes,*

*One wonders-*

*All this does not matter-*

*And in the instant panic*

*Poetry rises like clutched straw;*

*A cardboard box against a mushroom cloud-*

*A loin cloth on the day of judgement.*

*and in my heart  
I hear all-the-flutes-in-the-world  
being lonely,  
while in my head  
words like big cars driven  
up and down motorways  
go everywhere  
and never arrive.*

*So gently, that words might bruise it,  
It came tip-toeing like an autumn leaf  
Descending on the pages of an open book;  
Just my soul being itself  
Between two hushes of wind,  
While the word-men melted into time-*

*In this the middle way,  
Between the two wars of youth and age,  
I regard with equal dissatisfaction  
The forces of reason and passion  
And seek out the third way,  
Requiring stillness rather than movement.*

*God grant me deliverance  
From the ignorance of this subjectivity;  
Allow me the thin line  
Between dogma and weakness and  
Grant me the imaginative leap of love  
That rescues us from the damnation of Lucifer's pride.*

**T** *infinite remains indifferent*  
*my continual gathering*  
*Of sensation into ever-changing realities:*  
*Sea creates colours,*  
*Flowers create perfumes,*  
*Only the consciousness of man*  
*Requiring significance*  
*To comfort his temporality..*

MADNESS

*I am a thread too slender  
To suspend all this reality  
And the heavy burden of this rose,  
Cheating the moment of its connection,  
Weighs upon me-*

*A RED ROSE IS FOR LOVE*

*Yours is the beauty of transience.  
An eternal secret captivated  
In the remorseless certainty  
Of your fulfilment;  
The perfection of your form  
Is in its context:  
Caught, poised for one instant-  
Such piercing ecstasy  
Is only found in expectation-*

*The stillness of the flower,  
The pure note of the violin  
Do not change, but wait  
Patiently for understanding-*

*Shifting light and imperceptible erosion,  
mountains have been moving all day;  
heedless of my lack of attention.  
A rhythm of time that even rock must obey-*



*TELEVISION*

*The people are otherwise occupied  
Within,  
The tiny dot craving constant attention  
As it flits across the screen.  
Out here  
The blossom waits patiently,  
Occasionally trembling  
At a passing car.*

*Life is found where one least expects it-  
A moment of exquisite pain  
Nailing the heart to the rough wood  
Of a present moment.*

*THE PARKING METER: "TO BE CONSCIOUS IS NOT TO BE IN TIME"*

*This one moment, framed  
In the duration of one cup of instant coffee,  
Allows but a moment for consciousness.  
Thought regulated by the regulation  
Of a parking meter- dictating  
How long I may be stationary;  
One must pay for the privilege of such unproductivity.*

*RECORD*

*Such tears as these  
Are not stored in magnetic grooves  
For casual gratification,  
But softly interwoven  
Into moments of time, unsought,  
And not to be captured.*

**O**ne bird,  
high and suspended;  
Perched between day and night,  
Frames this vibrant stillness  
Gently rippling over all things  
As nature, in dumb prayer,  
Wonders at its existence-

## LOSS

*Incomprehension of absence:*

*What was being no more,*

*While a world of ordinariness continues*

*Its daily business of irrevocability.*

*Caught in the pedantry of Time*

*We are shamed before infinity;*

*The occupation of thought being inconsequential*

*While the human warmth of which we hardly are aware*

*Is now explained by remorseless emptiness*

*And we are left between anger and despair*

*Hopeless in our fragility.*

*My soul is exhausted from breaking,  
My heart is tired of beating-  
My mind aches of not understanding,  
My body trembles from loving;*

*And you say simply: 'it will pass'*

*I have known this rain in many cafés:  
Each delineating its own particular pattern  
Of sadness or anticipation. Penetrating  
A solitude that only this rhythm can touch-  
And so tears creep unsuspecting upon me  
Discreet in streaming water, strangely comforting  
In timeless repetition; giving a damp unity  
To each who fails to understand the human soul.*

*LE 'PRESQUE-ENFANT'*

*The scream of a plucked flower  
In a silent hole in the midst of men;  
An internal sob of separation  
As the life-line of entwined fingers  
Ache open against a callous pull:  
Life falling from earth.  
A strained space between still-stretched fingers-*

*Here, a Paris street; the traditional coffee,  
Full of emptiness I sit and wait.  
Amidst so much animation  
No one notices this one silence  
For me drowning all noise.*



*The flower offered of itself  
And eloquently spoke  
Of Gods  
In languages of rainbows  
Perfumes  
And secret silence.  
But, not having the authority of Words,  
I plucked it.*

*MOUNTAINS*

*Expectant of greater things,*

*We try climbing-*

*Higher*

*And Higher;*

*An effort that costs us much,*

*Leaving us short of breath*

*To find only*

*The ground below is much prettier.*

*Through the objectivity of science  
man seeks to formulate  
without the unsatisfactory opinion  
of the intangible emotion.*

*Thus perfectly understanding  
the absurd subjectivity  
of the individual experience, rationality  
might replace the absurdity of creation.*

*All I want is to stand in a field  
and to smell green,  
to taste air,  
to feel the earth want me,  
Without all this concrete  
hating me.*

**G**rown men play at children  
*but forget the rules-*  
*the children imitate*  
*the grown men*

*CIAO MASCHIO*

*When the sea no longer commands  
And the Voice has left the silence;  
When the universe is a subject kept in books  
And yellow is remembered only in visions of old men;  
While love-making is done in hospitals  
For reasons that scientists explain,  
The last poets will seek in desperation  
For a weed among the concrete.*

*'I SAW A CHILD'*

*I saw a child*

*Running*

*Wild*

*Through the trees-*

*I saw a child*

*Laughing,*

*Saw him smile*

*Watching the bees-*

*I saw him learn*

*Gratefully*

*Turn-*

*Towards knowledge,*

*I saw him grow*

*Trembling,*

*Throw*

*His purity away-*

*I saw him changed*

*Slowly,*

*Rearranged,*

*To jealousy; greed; hate-*

*I saw a child*

*Turned*

*To Vanity.*

*It will be beautiful even in its ending,  
The Earth;  
Even as God's Son, no amount of mocking  
Could demean, neither can our petty scars  
And mean and sullen purpose touch such dignity,  
Even in final destruction.*

ETERNAL MYSTERY

*Write me*

*And, if you can, lover,*

*Make sense of yourself;*

*Born forward on tides*

*Beyond your dreams.*

*Form me-*

*And, if you desire, lover,*

*Make life from stones*

*To comfort your loneliness.*

*Kiss me-*

*If you dare, lover,*

*And in this embrace*

*Find forgetfulness*



*Shedding skins, I find  
that I haven't even scratched the surface;  
an elephant hide of self-delusion  
protects my raw interior  
from the inclemency of truth.*

*Y*es,  
*I hear your voice,*  
*But I am afraid:*  
*Pure fire consumes*  
*And this petty mortality,*  
*Too quickly spent,*  
*Will leave me only ashes*  
*and loneliness.*

*Out of the millions, who do we remember?*

*Few only, who were perhaps*

*Not quite nice in their habits;*

*Egotists who put their dreams above*

*Humanity and, against all odds,*

*Put their anxiety above comfort.*

*if i had a little more time  
i would write a poem,  
if i had a little more time  
i would fall in love-  
but you see, it's already today  
and it will soon be tomorrow...*

*Love, Abstraction and other Speculations:  
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