

## Wilderness House Literary Review 5/4

*Adrienne Drobnies*

### **Today I Can Write The Happiest Song** after Pablo Neruda

Today I can write the happiest song

Write, for example, "The sun is shining  
and wheels itself through an endless sky."

The mist lifts itself off the horizon and sighs.

Today I can write the happiest song.  
I loved him, and he always loved me too.

Through days like this one I held him in my arms.  
He kissed me again and again under the endless sun.

Sometimes he loved me, I loved him too.  
Was it possible not to love?  
Today, I can write the happiest song  
and to know I have him no more, to know he is gone.

To see the finite sun, more diminished in his absence.  
And write what rises from the soul like heat from the pavement.

What matters more than that my love could not keep him?  
This sun still glows whether he is here or not.

This is nothing. Someone close is calling. Close by.  
My reason accepts that he is gone.

My eyes forsake the search to bring him closer.  
My heart has found him and he is here with me.

The same sun still draws shadows from the same trees.  
We, in this moment, are still the same.

I still love him, but uncertain, I ask, how did I love him?  
My voice lost the way to touch his hearing.

None other's. He will never love another.  
as he did before my kisses.

His voice, his troubled body, his eyes now closed.  
I still love him, but am I certain? Maybe I no longer love him.

Love is so long, forgetting so soon.

A day like this one I held him as he died  
and my soul is satisfied even if it has lost him.

Though this be the last joy you ever give me  
and the only lines I ever write for you.

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### Modern Poetry

Easy enough  
to assign depression  
to the modern condition  
as though  
recently invented  
the numbness of being  
cut-off  
as though accumulated losses  
never became too much  
for earlier generations  
still alive but watching  
each beloved fall  
and what was holding  
you up exactly?

Sheer toil kept the brain  
from wallowing in  
affluent torpor  
tilling the soil to make the  
garden  
still remembering being shut  
out from paradise  
not a single image  
to grace the despondent

Barefoot on the path  
running  
from despair  
to whatever arms  
the canyon throws up around you

Melancholy  
sorrow  
despondency  
despair  
all words  
for hurt beyond words

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### Unwelcome Guest

I have traveled a long way  
to poke you with a stick  
and milk the venom from your fangs  
Coiled creature  
I move around you with familiar ease –  
the frozen block of venom  
you offer as host  
digests me

What impels me to stay?  
Wanting –  
    to be a good guest  
Wanting –  
not to cause pain  
Those I love rest here  
Wanting –  
    a place to stay  
Knowing death is one thing  
life another

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### My Father Spoke To Me In His Dying Days

I don't want you to suffer  
because of me when I am gone.

It was a kind wish  
a great  
late wish.

The traditional Jewish blessing of the dying  
father to his eldest child  
Bless me too, father, said Esau, bless me  
too  
a wish too late

People called him gracious –  
perhaps he is part of  
how I found my own grace –

Yet I see this girl  
with a desk lamp  
rammed into her face  
each hour of the night  
and a woman  
who wakes her once again  
with accusations

I keep seeing this girl  
dropped off  
at school one morning  
told not to come home  
unless she was going to change  
(Change how?)

See this girl  
trapped in a room, a car  
shouts and threats  
You'll be imprisoned. You'll be committed.

Where am I now, she thought,  
if not in prison

See this girl  
with welts on her body,  
struggling against suffocation with a pillow

See this fifteen-year-old girl  
standing in a phone booth  
next to a 7-Eleven  
green and red Christmas colors  
hear her saying:  
It's very bad. I need you to get me out of this.

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Keep hearing: Yes  
I know it's bad. You'll just  
have to tough it out  
for a few more years.

Keep hearing that refusal.  
(Where was the graciousness in that – where the grace?)

And I did – tough it out  
survived  
was cautious (never quite enough)  
quiet (never quite quiet enough)

I became crafty,  
exploited what was there for me,  
sought the safety of friendship  
not kinship.  
Became educated.

Did not ask for help again  
though sometimes I did receive it.

Then I left that place of violence  
for a new country –  
a place where terrible things also happen –

Yet I walked out one evening in the moonlight  
a woman, unafraid.