

Erin Mouré / SIX POEMS ORDER, OR RED ENDS

If the order is not certain. The woman in the red cape
lighting a cigarette.
The red end of the cigarette.
What is known, known,
guides us, our tentative hands.
At night, I dream my mouth deep into your body, my hands.
We are looking at each other.
There is a door between us. Our hands touch.

Open.

ORDER 2

To connect for the first time, "this
remarkable love."
The arm entwined with the body, & entwined again,
leaving the fingers. Reflex points for
the sinuses, not the heart.
I test them. We test them.

We like this.

We go on.

ORDER 3

A light scramble over the dance floor
leaves us breathless. The grey shale above,
& over that, the sheer mtn passes.

What we can, or cannot
speak to. We move on.

With our backs turned, you can see
o reader, not what you recalled
of women's beauty, but

ropes, & crampons.

ORDER 4

Don't be afraid of thinking
otherwise. All poems have
their own amazing order,
by which we decode
"the author's intention."

Millions of people get sick of this in Grade 10
& never
read
poetry again.

Later, I tell a group of supervisors that
solving a problem has its ontological aspect,
& is like making a poem.

I read them one by Miklós Radnóti
that starts:

"The moon hangs on a clouded sky.
I am surprised that I live."

We go on.

Don't make the mistake of thinking this
is poetry. It's not. I just had to say this.
It was in order.

(It is also o.k. to say "ontological"
at this point
in the narrative.)

ORDER 5

If so, this is narrative.

ORDER 6

The problem of our
disobedience.

You are tied to your Catholic upbringing.

G. says.

But Catholicism in Alberta was different, she insisted.

Both ascetic and opulent.

The poor were ascetic and the rich opulent.

We could pass thru the eye of a camel,
or whatever.

I tell you.

We were that insistent, & thin.

The rich, too.

It's enough now.

We remember everything.

ORDER 7

So much influence just ends up
sounding like mockery.
For example: "The red end of the cigarette."
Who said that?

Certain tests can indeed be applied to
the chemical surface of the poem.
Neurasthenic glamour is everywhere, wobbling
on "dude" knees.
But nothing about the author.
Is she a good lay?
Can she kiss?
Who knows.

ORDER 8

This remarkable love. Certain
pressure points of touch, by which
the world is made manifest
to the inner organs, the liver, heart, lungs.

It all fits.

The pancreas sees thru a horizontal slat
just over the joint of the thumb, under
the middle fingers.

The feet too. Feet & hands, by which is visible
the internal order.
Red ends of the cable, open

When they touch any being, the
impulse begins

ORDER 9

Sybilline light of the women, dancing
The air bladder of a fish,
turned upward

These comparisons, what we can or
cannot, etc., compare to
At night, remarkable or

hilarious.

Oh, do what you want, friends of mine.
I'm putting my coat on, holding my arms
up over my head, hair, not
with it, having danced in the cigarette smoke,
unable to breathe now, having

had or not had
"a light scramble over the dance floor," or
"two kisses," or should I say
"the eye of a camel," or even
"two beers"

SHUTTER DOOR

A woman behind
a shutter door. Concentrates. On the radio, the
word "rain." Over & over, those
immutable sentences, jewels fallen
to the earth.

The cat tears at her leg. The cat jumps up
on the table.

The woman looks up.

"Those immutable sentences."

—

A world where "this," & "this"
come together. People bring wine into
the restaurant, as is the custom.
Coats on the backs of chairs.
They sit down, their good shirts
& elbows, the signs to one another, hello.
We eat. More wine.
Laughter.
Our heads bow closer.
This, & this.

—

If a woman steps out from the restaurant
into the starlit
night. Wanting to speak
about those stars.
Not "light," but "time."
The presence of the "past."
The intertwining of this, or any,
moment.

—
A line drawn from the sky to the ground produces
amiable behaviour. Another woman passes &
looks out, they both smile, look down, look
up again. Look over. Wanting

to speak about those stars but not daring.
Wanting the intertwining of this or any
moment.

In the restaurant, at the table,
the others are still eating.
The crowd
howls.

Specifically, habit of speech over food.
Break bread, they say, leaning forward,
laughing it up a bit.
Oh, enough wine. No, more!
Someone puts a coat on & leaves, comes
back again. We laugh. Oh,
the stars come on over the table.
As if we were out in the field, & the granary,
dark & full,
had come over the hill, to join us.
Talking that loud.

—

The woman behind the shutter door. The line
between ground & sky is, in fact,
the word “behind.” Without which, would you
know what was happening?
The *woman*?
The *shutter door*?
Where are they?

—

What is the shutter door hiding.
The people in the restaurant have been noisy
for a long time, interrupting each other.
The woman concentrates, not “oblivious”
but calculating
specific differences: the space between
the elbow & the end of
the arm

The hand, say.
The hand opening the shutter door.

—

On the street the woman passes, or (please)
hesitates, watching her,
seeing those stars.

—

How can saying “opening the door”
make it open?

How can saying “make it open”?

We all can be sure of this, can’t we?

The dust of the stars in their hair?

Who knows, afterward.

Who knows if the door is open or
shut, because you say so.

Who knows if the woman has heard any of this.

The people in the restaurant have stopped eating.

The field has shut up.

If the door is shut, maybe the woman is not even
there.

We are left with the shutter door.

Oh, time, in the form of
stars.

—

Help us.

cure our sentences.

THIS ICE, OR THE AUNTS

O nineteenth century houses.

Where is your breath in the doorway when I walk in?

Holding my handfuls of pure scribble,

pure sensible, pure corn.

Where is the thousandth year of frost, in a year of storm,

in a year where the trees are in cold leaf & we

wash our faces with those leaves, spiting the frost.

In us there is nothing of a century.

In us no mark of a single day!

Our t-shirts are knitted, their plant-life whispers to the trees.

Already we remember nothing!

Nothing but pure corn.

Where is your century?

Your houses?

Feminism?

Rain?

We are wearing our arms like possible love.

As if there could be one more or less embrace!

Not seeing the storm!

I think of the black coats of our aunts

in the world, pensive or furious at the uncles,

scraping ice from the doorway.

O summer! The avenue, hot houses. Look at it!

Today!

Do you remember the aunts in their overcoats. . .

Do you remember their tears,

they, who with their eyes could say nothing.

Nothing with their voices.

Where *is* this ice?

PLANES OVER ICELAND, OR MODERN TRAVEL

A DESCRIPTION

It is a description of a woman. She's out in the grass
before the flat-roofed houses, long herringbone
coat done up at her neck, scarf & same-coloured *boina*,
or tam.

She wears her hair inside her hat, hearing it
better & better, her hair talks of the tree.

She walks toward it.

She is her own description,
only. The sky is blue & the drapes pulled
in the windows. The air light sings, coldly.
Her hair listens.

O ocean.

Perestroika,* she thinks. The tree sings.

Planes over Iceland, she thinks.

* Perestroika: "restructuring": refers to the restructuring of the Soviet economy, part of Gorbachev's "glasnost."

THE GREEN ISLAND

What says enough, or doesn't say
at all: the voyage over the pole traverses
the green island.

The woman's coat done up for warmth
in front of the flat-roofed houses:

Belfast, Edinburgh, London, München.

Or the Plateau Mont Royal.

Brown trees risen on the edge of the Mountain,
not a mountain, a Rock land, not a rock land.

Her breath in the air.

She pushes her hands deeper into
her pockets, no, into the description
of her pockets.

& BLUE SEA

One night she dreams she has
a ticket on a plane that will pass over Iceland
on its way to Edinburgh or Paris.

In the dream she packs her coat
then lifts it out & wears it.

The coat is cold, as if left outside a long time.

What does it matter if she went to the
desert in the previous poem, she thinks.

It's so much description.

The flat-roofed houses of the Plateau Mont Royal
traded for the volcanic rock of Iceland.

The clouds part, or dawn comes, she wakes up
with the stale taste of the plane in her mouth,
& looks down, over the green cliffs
& blue sea of the island.

VISIBLE

More or less, the street & tree appear
Visible. The white iron fence
marks the perimeter of her house, her coat
buttoned high up, & a scarf too.
November & the cold air biting the throat
& fingers,
a description of cold air.
To afford to go anywhere you need a ticket.
To think of this & describe any trip
you want to, costs you nothing,
for example, the route over the pole
to Europe.

First cross Iceland.

She turns toward the house again
& touches the door handle, pulls her coat
open, bows to
the ancestor of the doorway, the cliffs of Iceland,
walks in.

STYLE, OR COURAGE

The fact is, more women are not murdered by their husbands.
The fact is, it doesn't give you courage.
The fact is, the disappeared woman was in fact found, her body, etc.
Not many details. An autopsy, the skull
bludgeoned, & shot. He told her, after all,
he'd come & kill her after he got out of court where he was
for hurting her.
The facts make, poor
poetry.
A whole class of people, prefer, the light in the green
leaves, the tremulous
unusual wordings that indicate
the poem's author. *Style*, they say.
But the woman is dead.
The body stares up at the green leaves,
meat, for maggots.
A few yards away, the highway.
People go where they go.
Women lie down, even tonight, with their murderers.

TRIX

I'm starting to write like a dog. To scream like a dog chained to a post in a yard. Then lie down, close to the post. Rolling over on the post & writing with the pen in my right paw. You've seen me there, the heroic spot on my forehead, or between the ears, my paw on the fresh page, a few crumpled ones nearer the post or farther. Or just snoozing. Hair on my face, dreaming the undersides of cars. The cement foundation of the garage. The light between the fence pickets, with brief movies of the neighbour's children, their fat little knees & knickers, screaming. I can't write when kids are screaming, I'm a dog. I'm starting to write like a dog. When the light comes up over the garage I move into the shade & leave my papers near the post I'm chained to. I'm chained to a post, I can dream, can't I? You can see my white spot between the ears, or on my chest is it. Where dogs have spots, I want a spot there. I'm a dog, I'm not going to howl! People own me. It's a big yard. I can take it.