

It Was Yeats Who Took Me

It was Yeats who took me. I was seventeen,
In love with watery consonants, with boys.
But Yeats would show me what my life could mean.

Afraid of men, yet drawn, a sucker for looks –
I studied his dark forelock, his sweet mouth.
It was Yeats who took me, I was seventeen.

My best friend's boy, also a bow-lipped wonder,
Took me for screaming rides on a Norton 850.
But Yeats would show me what my life would mean.

I talked the boyfriend silly, held off advances
Until the time I couldn't. And yet, and yet,
It was Yeats who took me! I was seventeen

And ready to believe words spoken to shells,
Because he was so lonely, like me, so weird.
Yeats would show me what my life could mean.

I clung to that great body. His delight
In love, and loss, and water, and swans was mine!
It was Yeats who took me, (I was seventeen),
And showed me, word by word, what life could mean.

Repository

We never went to the pool in Florence,
but I thought in the hills, where a ghost of you
took in honeycomb, the net on your hat
so grey it could not be told from the leaves –

I thought how pleasant it would be to descend at will,
as gods can do, and swim our laps
next to the river, the children riding plastic ducks
where torrents had risen and carried holy books.

“Do you want *gelati*?” I would cry to the boys
but they would not answer until later,
when they’d shaken the gold drops from their backs
and stared at San Miniato’s brilliants.

We were storing love in our cells for a reason.

Hawthorn and Waxwings

In the hawthorn twelve cedar waxwings
Bounce and pluck berries that mimic
The scarlet of their wingtips. Is this art?
Whose were the palette and the brush
Is not the question, since Anon configured
Berries and birds, making us happy. “Ecstatic!”

Is the better word. (Nabokov loved the ecstatic
Dignity of the color, the busyness of the waxwing.
Why would he not, a master of configuring
Identities in mirrors, twin worlds mimicking
Perfectly love’s plosive variations, his brush
Depicting much more than memory’s art.)

Did the miniaturist call it Art?
Did it hide from her a long while, the way the ecstatic
Birds in winter do? Then, walking, did she come on brush
That turned, in a blink, to waxwings, a haze of waxwings
Working hard at those trembling berries, and, for her, mimicking
Ways we ward off death? Some do it by configuring,

On idle days, the gates of heaven, (where such figuring
Is past all use). Each is alone then. No art,
No priced estate will mean a thing there, nor mimicking
Saints’ courage. (As for those ecstatic
Ways of going, that time has passed. Not even waxwings
Get in free.) The miniaturist lifted her brush

Even so, to make life, sometimes to brazenly brush
All she could into – *yes* – ornament! No configuring
Of forever moved her now. Making the waxwings
Was enough, almost, the blatant art
Of their bodies and flight, their blunt bills, their ecstatic

Sociability, their gauging eyes -- not mimicking

An ideal. They *are* it – carmine, ocher, black, white -- not mimicking
But being the palette she needs. The brush
Of the miniaturist, though, was never ecstatic
As it worked, but cool, and slow, configuring
How three, four, five, six colors could make art:
Living flames, called here “Hawthorn and Waxwings.”

In it is no trace of the maker, her brush, or of mimicking.
Only this ecstatic configuring of waxwings,
And the breath of art that makes the hawthorn tremble.

