

# Bound to Say

by Victor Fowler

You could not have been born in a better time,  
for now everything is lost.  
Simone Weil, *Gravity and Grace*.

She means the feeling that bombs fell while you slept.

You are breaking thin canes, trying to get a lesson out:  
the points stay inside.  
With the feeling that I arrived at another planet or that reality ended.

The voice echoes like water calling to water in a blind well.  
Sometimes they help buds to bloom, and sometimes they spill out clay.  
That's all: we drink up the sap of abandonment, and with abandonment we talk.  
In such a plot of errors walking drives you crazy.

I've thought much about this, or, if I really want to be truthful,  
I think about nothing else. I spend my days trying to make  
it fit, like baggage in a jam-packed train,  
and that train is time, rattling.  
My move was there: eager to be taken.  
I shaped the molten steel of questions.  
I saw white heads yesterday, passing by with their working-class scars.

Look at me, becoming stronger, blind,  
obeying humble roots  
Osip Mandelstam, "I raise this green to my lips."

We felt the breath of time pressing  
along the road between the bushes.  
Eyes immense, swollen with seeing.

As if we had no skin, our footsteps hurt.

Or the nights going to the seashore  
to let the horizon speak. Of plenitude and reverence,  
the clouds full of fear.

In that water the children were bathed, and now  
it casts a spell in the basin: "Drink!"

You, who returned with pockets packed with shells,  
who swore that if we blew hard,  
we would hear voices, voices calling back to us.

Oh, voices burnt by the air. . .  
Salvatore Quasimodo, "Written possibly on a tomb."

It begs for more than one body's blood,  
this task of damaged tissues and healing breaths.

There are also conditions: no cracks  
across which we could build green  
or an enchantment of wings—the sky—  
but the smoothness and dryness of an edge.

These are the days of those who drank the milk  
of excess. They search in the streets, and they shout  
with happiness when faces surface,  
half-buried and withered,  
and bitten by spiders.

The only way to avoid the abyss is to look in it and measure it,  
and to explore it, and descend into it.  
Cesare Pavese, *The Business of Living*.

You throw into the air a handful of letters,  
because fortune is in charge of organizing cycles of brokenness  
inside the symbol, and only they could pull it out,  
leaving behind your bones.

So much joy in that desire for permanence!

Your roots are somewhere, and it is enough  
to keep digging, still deeper—at least that is the faith.

I don't think you will change. With idols in your back, the same  
as bronze for waking and a hatred for its gleam.  
The same again if you pull threads from time,  
or if you strike it with rage or toss it on the junk-pile.

All these years I loved in silence what you loved,  
I felt I was burnt across your body, and that was  
my light. All these years you have drunk from the ineffable:  
now you deserve to sleep.

Day is at the door,  
night wind already here,  
no new morning will come.  
Bertolt Brecht, "Against Seduction."

This matter of trees uprooted, festivals of fire in the countryside,  
grinding winds and spade that divides any attempt; through one end  
they introduce days and through the other end they breathe the smell of future  
ashes. Lovers of punishment enjoy repeating it, and they pass information about every  
new detail that might help. The sky widens  
the mouth and swallows, awaiting the moment to fall on the heads  
of men grown numb.

These are terrible threats, but their existence is also  
solace for the bitterness of lives, and, in terms of kingdoms,  
they would proudly go down with an operatic ending. But if the talk is about  
the heart of neighbourhoods, it is dirty and simplistic.

The sweepers of the Apocalypse warn about the position of the dump,  
and the place swarms with go-getters who argue whatever proof.  
Believers beat the sunrise with a giant drum  
and wake everyone. These who went dizzy pull out roots  
and show the bizarre prize they find: bones. But you,  
you keep them under your shirt. These you will not share.

I have broken my black horse's neck in the darkened wood,  
from his purple eyes insanity sprouted.  
Georg Trakl, "Revelation and Fall."

From my father's neck I pulled it out, and it was no ceremony,  
flags and gleams in a smelting plant.  
Not the cosmic happiness of one who knows himself to be raised up  
before dying.  
Not even the calendar mark of an important  
farewell or, among the book's pages,  
an enlightening inscription.  
Simply taking something you consider worthy,  
that somehow it is yours,  
and leaving the room quickly.

In nights like anemia, I touched it, and it had the texture of mud.  
In nights like disturbance, I walked toward a place where  
the barking of dogs stuns you.  
In nights like collapse, I washed by breath like a glove,  
turning it inside out.  
In nights like possibility, I wore a skin over my dented skin,  
and I understood the meaning of walking, still alive,  
on these coals.

The flight freely chosen by the bird until his death.  
Tristan Tzara, "In the Way of the Stars."

The scene begins with a statue's surprise.  
She moves her face down.  
Slow dissolve: only her dazzled pupils survive.

At least that's what we can see from here,  
though it is truly an act of appearance  
and disappearance between Oxygen and Boredom.

Armed with such axes, the statue enters the nucleus  
of darkness, toward the origin of water.

I have given myself to its practice so that it can rise and flow.

Breath is held with tightened eyes,  
until the pain is such that it can no longer be suffered,  
and down come stars, like a torrent.

In the end, if you destroy, it should be with nuptial tools.  
René Char, *Les matinaux*

A whole life of bonds to arrive here, where you place  
the axe and absorb the horizon; almost hysterical, the glimmer  
of points burning toward the gymnastics of another noon.

The painful burn of time: our time.

Get ready to listen to the prayers of vertigo,  
the drum of earth when it is broken from the inside,  
get ready to render language.

As if the son had a son in his womb.

...may he return in a sad way; with no friends,  
on a strange ship, and may he find trouble at home.  
Homer, *Odyssey*, Book IX.

Made of cracks, the friendship of those hands, so that  
when they go away, they scatter threads like blood: red.  
Red like the seeds in the cement walls of construction sites.

For it to be possible, I placed strands to compose  
the paper of so much testimony, hostage to the intensity and  
the transparency, and, if something remains at the end, may that be.

It is to be sucked eagerly before it ceases.

That they read the currents, the risks of being intoxicated  
by only laying down a finger on a map, and just as well,  
whatever we pay for dreams of transmutation.

This is what I wanted while my hand, scattering lines,  
felt the scratch of the broom's bristle: to wet nature  
falling though filth and grime and to cross my sea with all valves open.

And, if something remains at the end, may that be.

The fact of having been blinded sharpens your sight to the light.  
Gunnar Ekelöf, *Divan*.

A man's biography is as simple as the contractions  
of an enormous womb, as the boiling of an atlas' pages,  
the collection of carbonized heads mumbling words in  
the cliff and the surge of waves pulling out signs now floating  
like dead animals: he jumps to fish them out.

From such pieces, dissimilar, we were made with tools in love with oil  
for when the due date arrived.  
From garbage hands molded brick, in the woods they chopped  
branches that cut their skin as they moved forward, tilling the earth  
with the hardness of iron.

He knows the secrets of the ripped stomach, of the night  
that darkens all and whatever there is to know about the light that does not consent  
to be looked at because it turns you into stone.

All that memory he places in the centre of the room and closes his eyes  
so that desire can make it grow.  
All that belief in his wife's womb.

...like a net where the gods captured us like beasts.  
Giorgios Seferis, *Euripides, The Athenian*.

The nearness of these bricks sucks breath,  
sprinkled with a saliva that scratches.

You discovered then, after having pulled out the root,  
that there is no core to blame, only derivations.

Bitten by the need, like breathing, for answers,  
you put your hands into warm, wet holes,  
into the worm's body, and you dug your fingers into it.

You can swear later that even the hardest brush will not remove it,  
that somewhere, yet to be explored, there is the luck of something  
growing among stones.