

William Minor

Another Morning

What once came with ease
has been placed on hold,
but I still like to get up
in the morning
to a woman and a world
I'm lucky to discover
on another day of sunlight or rain.

I take to my feet, and
the effort feels good
albeit cautious, and slow—
yet the trek to the kitchen
is all it takes to make
me grateful to find
the woman whose heart I still love.

We no longer need to count
the years we have been
together, because duration
that makes up this moment belongs
to us alone, as one another.

So we sit together now
and you read a book
and I think whatever thoughts
I can—nothing resolved but
your presence here with me
in this sacred room: a simple
kitchen where we live
to love for one more day.

The Delights of Age

Just one portion of my body seems
to be working as it should now:
the *newest* part, the only portion
that's solely *current*: the right knee

the bone marrow of which has been
created from scratch by way of a process
called Subchondroplasti, but ...
this beautiful (functional) new knee
is the only part of my eighty-two
year old body that doesn't complain
on a daily (and nightly) basis of pain
or displeasure of one sort or another.

My left foot suffers from neuropathy
(nerve damage); both calves are swollen
with edema (water retention) and I
now set high standards for fashion
by wearing brightly-colored corrective
stockings day and night.

Moving
upward (on this tour of the temple, my body),
I still have two knees, both of which
have accumulated their share
of surgeries (meniscus tears three
times, and the process I mentioned)—
and my groin? Well, forget it! "I'm over
the hump," as a comedian once quipped.
My stomach makes noises (groans and
growls) that resemble a truck with a failed
catalytic converter; I have an umbilical hernia,
and GERD (gastroesophageal reflux
disease) to boot, which requires
me to clear phlegm from my throat
and qualifies me as the perfect
adjunct to any party; and my belly
has mastered a pretty good imitation

of a whale when it comes to appetite
and size.

My lungs are relatively
intact (some mild wheezing, and
a propensity to become bronchitic
at the drop of a hat; I've had pneumonia
three times in my life). I'm all heart
when it comes to feelings, and the pump
itself works on occasion (although I've
had to work hard to keep my blood
pressure down where it belongs). Right shoulder?

Bursitis. Vestibular system? Tinnitus
and permanent damage to my inner ear
(vertigo, for twenty-seven years now).
Oh yes, and to top it all off: constant sinusitis.

Eyesight compromised (age-related
macular degeneration and ocular migraine;
but compensation: should things get worse,
I just may play piano as well as Ray Charles).
My vocal chords are in good shape, for I
can still SING! SING! SING! An activity
I relish, and live for: any kind of song,
from jazz to blues to folk to opera to show
tunes. And thank God, I can still
TALK. TALK, TALK, TALK!
(about almost *anything*; you name it!)

But I refuse to take requests when
I sing (and play piano); well, I might do
"Aint' Misbehavin,'" "The Nearness
Of You," or "As Time Goes By."
I forgot to mention my hands, which,
although arthritic, are mostly OK
(when I play! And thank God for *that*
again!). One of my favorite songs is
The Avett Brothers' "No Hard Feelings"
(perfection: words and music, along with

Seth's voice, and soul). I have no
enemies but myself--and I'm learning how
to live with him (myself), with resigned
affability. I have no hard feelings
for what my body (my temple) has
been put through or put me through; no Sir.
No hard feelings at all. Just gratitude
for the gift of life with all it makes us bear
for the sake of knowing we are worthy of it.

And we are.

And we are. And we are: a three-tag tune
with which to end this poem--with thanks
(the only prayer that should suffice)
for my one healthy preserve: my brand
new knee—and maybe the rest of me too.

Time

Why do we need it so? It doesn't even *exist*, unless we make it happen by consulting a watch, or wait for the sun to go down—which is just what I am doing now, but trying *not* to count time, whatever portion of it I've been out here in the back yard. The sun feels *just right* on my face: a warm bath of bliss, the caress of heat—so splendid, so consoling, so benign, I did not think to *count* at all until just now, when the wind came up and I began to feel the chill, and realized the sun *was* going down (or doing whatever it does to remove itself, eventually, from view).

But what *time* is it? Sunset? Twilight? Nightfall? Dusk? Just the *death* of another day? That's all too dramatic, because I bet I have at least another hour, or two, or even eternity before I call this a day (Friday the 13th, by the way, and it's April, "the cruelest month")—so *stay*, sun! Stay! I command (as Mayakovsky might, or would); but the sun pays no attention to me at all, nor has it any reason to.

I sit here
for a few more ... minutes? Hours?
Centuries? Eternities? And *nothing*
seems to pass (not even time!), nor grow
colder now; I just sit beside a garden,
beneath a sky, the sound of airplanes
singing overhead, just sit in ...time?
Whatever it is, I *never* want to leave
this state, so at home in it am I.

I could
call it God's time, eternity, if it's
time at all, but that sounds pretentious,
so I settle for this prolonged *sit*, feeling
warm within the emerging cold

and the descent of the sun, but in no
hurry, feeling no haste at this demise,
the sun's or my own, or the death
of anything, I just *sit* here, perfectly
still, perfectly content, and sip a glass
of wine, and then another (Why count
how many—an act that takes *time*?). I begin
to wonder why my wife is taking so long
shopping, but that concern too is irrelevant.

The evening sun goes down behind
the telephone wires and darkening trees
I love, and only the chill of evening
will take me back inside the house,
but not the passage of time.

On Reading, After Long Absence, the Poems of Charles Peguy

Who would dare, innocently, to adopt, as an alter ego, the voice of God? Charles Peguy, who was born where Bishop Saint Aignan curtailed the progress of Attila the Hun in the Fifth century, and where Joan of Arc would, a thousand years later, make her stand. Charles Peguy, a poet whose father died when he was still a baby, and whose mother made a living for the family mending chairs—a task Peguy himself was very good at: this poet who called himself a “peasant” long after he failed to graduate (having tried several times) from the Ecole Normale in France, and who was, at the age of forty-one, shot in the forehead leading his troops (in a conspicuous red and blue uniform) through the hell of Villery, shells bursting all around them. He died there.

Charles Peguy, who left behind a world of poetry I would discover when I was nineteen years of age, and was moved to faith by the opening lines of “The Passion of Our Lady,” in which the parents of Christ confess, “It was *their* fault,” for they “had always been too proud

of him.” They ruthlessly explained that, throughout his “brilliant” display of learning before the doctors, he should have been more careful, because “people like that have good memories” (otherwise they would never have become doctors), and he “must have hurt their feelings that day.”

Charles Peguy. Where and how, in your peasant soul, did you find the insight to write, as God speaks, “When you love someone, you love him as he is”; or as a God who recognizes perfection (because He is perfect himself), knowing how difficult

it is to attain—requires less of it from others:
aware they will never learn to swim should He
always hold them above water—a God who sees
not only the deepest ocean and darkest forest,
but “the deep heart of man” as well; a God
who has witnessed “beading tears” of love that shall
outlast “the stars in heaven”; a God who knows
“whole lives from birth to death,” unwinding like
a “skein of wool,” yet finds nothing so beautiful
as a child falling asleep saying prayers, and laughing
happily, not even knowing what those prayers
are all about.

Charles Peguy. Like him I only
pray while walking the streets or riding a bus,
not in a church—for if God is not *everywhere*,
and speaks not *here* as well as in heaven,
He is nowhere at all. And that would be
a crying shame, in the eyes of Charles Peguy
and in these eyes of mine which still can see
“nights that follow each other and are linked,”
continuous, like the “innermost part” of our
being, the being in which we bathe, are nourished,
were created, in which all we are was made.

Falling In Love

*“Loved ones will break your heart
With or without you.”*

The Avette Brothers, “Smithsonian”

Another extra-large human irony:
the all-consuming state of having
fallen in love takes over, everything—
and eventually will even exclude
the object of love, the loved one,
from its domain.

Perhaps we are
much more than we know we are—
truly capable of loving someone
for their actuality, and staying
on course for a lifetime—but we
seem to settle for less, feeling
there’s only room enough in love
for the act of loving itself.

Something, or someone
has *got to go*, and that’s the beloved, because
the subject, ourselves, is in love with love—
no person but a condition, like a head cold
bed rest alone might cure: solitude, drawn
curtains in an attic chamber we inhabit
alone, dreaming of perfect love—
with or without an object, a loved one,
to distract us from the commitment.

William Minor has published seven books of poetry, the latest *Some Grand Dust* (a finalist for the Benjamin Franklin Award) and *Gypsy Wisdom: New & Selected Poems*. He has also published three nonfiction books on music (most recently *Jazz Journeys to Japan: The Heart Within*), and two memoirs: *The Inherited Heart* and *Going Solo: A Memoir, 1953-1958*. Commissioned to write a spoken word suite (*Love Letters of Lynchburg*), he set his own poems to original music for two other CDs: *For Women Missing or Dead* and *Mortality Suite*.