

LOOKING OVER THE SHEEP ONE EVENING

The shapes of homesteads, like a hundred white sheep,
bleach the summer pastures like a growth of mushrooms.
The heat of the setting sun smells stronger than the sheep
led out in the evening, throwing dust around.
In the evening we take Mr Dender 's little daughter,
cracking whips over the glaciers,
like the harsh words heard spoken among officers,
dispersing the sheep like a fire set amid stones beneath a deel.
Looking over the lambs in the evening, like drawing stars,
their bare legs glinting in the chill like fine feathergrass.
A herd of sheep, round as the moon, like pressed cheese,
and the white lambs rushing onto the wild steppe.

1975

A MAN IS TALKING WITH THE STARS

I was lying face down
on the turning earth,
one ear to the stars,
the other ear listening to the ground.

There was an insect, on a root's tip,
truly an unknown pleasure for me.
This song, such melody, was the song of trees,
hoping like the soil for rain.

But to my ears,
a strange clarity.
And Mongolia meanwhile,
the music of its speech.

I have listened to you, and you
are certainly listening to me.
I have heard the people talking with the stars,
from the doors of the turning earth.

A POEM TO BE READ TO THE MEN WHO CHECK THE PYLONS

The mountain men are tanned from their rural work,
they are faded like telegraph poles.
They carry three lines of jewels,
they do not consider happiness.
I am writing a poem about the men who check the pylons,
I will read it from the tops of the telegraph poles!
I place my feet
in moonsilver stirrups
and head off like a horseman
into the blue skies.
If I think that I have faded,
like the birds in the treetops,
I will surely go now,
onto the flightpath of the sky.
Love brings warmth to my eyes as I watch,
and passion to my mind.
and one of the men's fine wives,
a gentle girl, was happy,
making tea, a kind support
for the man she loves.
When springtime comes,
a visitor from far away,
then it is like a bird of the earth
among the blue mirages of spring.
The mountain men are tanned from their rural work,
they are faded like telegraph poles.
they are coming back,
pulling the three lines of jewels.
I have written a poem about the men who check the pylons,
and I'll read it from the tops of the telegraph poles!

1977

I LOVE ALL THE EVERYDAY THINGS

I love all the everyday things.
I love everyday beauty, the flow of the river.
I enjoy their formless forms.
I love all the everyday things.

I love all the everyday things.
I love, not jewels, but regular stones.
All that I make myself is beautiful.
I love all the normal things.

There is no color painted onto flower petals.
Your face is not made fairer with rouge.
The flowers are beautiful by being flowers,
and you are beautiful to me by being born.

FLOWERS IN THE WINDOW

The flowers in the window are beautiful,
but a bouquet is a little sad.
Though I water them each day,
they seem a little dry.

Their scent is lovely,
but it does not stimulate the mind.
The fine flowers of the sun and moon
are a little out of sorts in an airless home.

These flowers are charming,
but butterflies do not love them.
They spend their lives alone,
in poverty like a widow.

These charming flowers
see neither sun, nor win, nor rain.
They pass through neither fall nor winter,
their suffering is silence to me.

1979
Ereentsav

I plant a cutting,
a life is added.
I break a cutting,
a life is taken away.

While nature gives us birth,
we cut down trees.
This is not the life we live –
felled trees are counted by the unfelled.

AROUND YOU...

Around you, I am weak, like the horses who come running in the evening of
their life.

Around you, I am sad, like the birds who cannot fly in the evening of their
autumn.

Around you, I make music with a flute of reeds or feathergrass.

Around you, I besiege the streams and hills, the voices and the smiles.

Around you, I forget the skies and the stars.

Around you, I cannot separate the oboe and the grasses.

Around you, I write no songs about eternity or death.

Around you, is it more normal to sit close by or far away?

1980

All things begin with beauty.
My son begins by coming from far away.
Love begins with a smile.
Spring rain begins with flowers.

All things begin with beauty.
We begin by sharing gooseberries.
My son begins with dreams in drunkenness.
The hawk begins in a ball upon a mountain peak.

All things begin with beauty.
A man's child begins by going far away.
Hasar and Basar begin by following a cart.
The grass on the Hangai begins in ripples.

All things begin with beauty.
The sweetest begins in drinking your gift of tea.
Grandma begins by bearing on her back a wooden spindle.
A fire begins by lighting up a darkened night.

The snow rages
like a shy white horse,
but at evening
the sky clears, yes it clears.
In the wisdom of the seasons,
fall follows golden summer,
and we two
remain, yes we remain.
My childhood
friend, stay close,
we'll coax
the world in, towards
the open fire!
The light of our mind touches
the window, clears the frost.
Our daughters will be Venusian,
playing music on hollow reeds.
In the good times yet to come
my motherland will be great.
And all my songs' melodies
will be turquoise, and soft in your hair.

TO THE POET'S WIFE

With the bright clarity of my verse
I shall pour silver birds into the golden goblets on the party table!
I shall seize spoons of arhi to the poet's wife, like little larks
waiting with me for autumn, they will start singing to the poet's wife.
These little birds, born with me on the sunny steppe,
are unmatched singers, please feel love for them!
They do not emit the scent of poppy, but
they have the Herlen's melody, come to the poet's wife.
When I come to the city, am I hobbled by the country people?
When they let me go, can they in fact do such a thing?
For me the people in Ulanbaatar are different from your poet friends,
and you, the poet's wife, know if the difference is gentleness.
As you walk down an alley, like a poet from a shining city,
the skyblue surrounds you, lightning pulls down the lines,
absorbing into the mind's peaceful lines how the sky is beautiful...
On the road of days in your distant shining city, the legs of young girls.
like a sounding organ...
I give a sigh, applaud like people at the opera!
So will you go onto the countryside, with the night sky broad?
Whatever it is, nothing more and nothing less,
the countryside is like the girls who have become this poet's wife.
I will make for you of grasses a resting-place.
We will sleep upon the green steppe, though our dreams will not be special,
and our silken, starry covers will not protect us.
And does Heaven watch
our legs, scrambling between the stars...?

SAMANTHA

Yesterday evening,
I felt uneasy,
the rain whimpered, and
the autumn moon
emerged from the clouds,
Samantha!
At night, in my dreams,
I suffer
on my pillow
of the wide earth,
Samantha!
Outside, amid
the ocean birds,
a single white swan
flies through my dreams,
one rusty red
arrow strays back
and forth, Samantha.
In the seamless sky,
the moon is eclipsed,
only
to creep back beyond the mountains.
Samantha, I know this.
And now, Samantha,
only this morning, I know that,
in my dreams,
I did not trust disguise,
my intuition
was joined with you!
Forgive me, Samantha,
forgive
my lack of success,
my earlier feelings!
Oh, had I known at that time
that I would destroy you,
my American girl,
I would have told you,
by radio or by phone.
Samantha!
I see you,
with your mother,
Samantha,
smiling, standing
in Moscow, in Red Square.
With your lovely eyes,
you are a Mongolian girl.
A girl so slight,
the people of this world

would never doubt
that you had come in peace,
Samantha.
Your first act
will be forever, Samantha.
This world of mine
cannot forget the name Samantha.
Samantha. SAMANTHA.

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THE POEM-BIRD

As I sit writing a poem,
the door should not be open.

This poem-bird...
would fly the nest.

 Though it might go,
 I would not chase after it.

 The butterflies in the nearby meadows
 would fade like jewelled rainbows.

As I sit writing a poem,
you should not involve yourself.

This poem-bird...
would not land in my lap.

 Though I might miss it,
 I should not find it while I lived.

 We shall not hold it, my love,
 it will become a golden fish.

As I sit writing a poem,
my heart should not flutter.

This poem-bird...
will beat its death against the window.

 From where will it come down to me,
 my beloved poem?

 Like a bird entering by the door,
 it will not bear tenderness.

While I was sitting upon your banks,
my river, my river, you
were flowing...

In the sky's bright night,
beneath the bridge
I, like a drenched willow,
will be there with you, all alone...
For many nights
I will shelter close by you
my river, my river...
in whose direction will you be flowing?
To think of this made me happy, but
it made the waiting hard to think of this!

As the clouds unravel across the eastern skies,
I think about my homeland.
These days, with the rain weeping,
will not fully clear my mind.

These great and lovely trees have turned green,
and there are birds here,
but my homeland seems powerless
in the clarity of its song...

I yearn for my dear, beloved homeland
and I am three days distant, my
jade snuff-bottle tucked away.
And three nights I have moistened,
my gums seemed hard as rocks,
the bowl of cigarettes you sewed,
scented with last season's flowers.

Though tired from a few days' travel,
still, like my poems, I am bright.
The birds are come to the lake,
to the pools, among the rushes,
and this day, utterly,
I would come home to you.

for A

Blue mists, no mountains, no water.
Blue mists, no clouds, no grass.
Blue mists, no winter, no spring.
These days of blue mist.

Some creature, my love,
returning from peaks, from ravines.
In the rising and the setting of the sun,
the leaves of flowers, and pollen,
are turned blue in the moon.

When someone's child
grows sad,
as they rise up in misery,
there is no mist,
there and here, on the rivers.

Later, will the fire
spread everywhere?
Most probably...
All of you seem
so melancholy.

A MOMENT OF PURE WHITE

Beneath the pure white snows, the grass is time's continuation.
Within the pure white blankets is the continuation of a woman's slumber.

The pure white snow takes into the grass the melody of my footsteps.
Within the pure white blankets, at her feet, lie the woman's discarded clothes.

When dawn breaks white above the grasses and morning gathers it in,
the fragrance is the fragrance of the earth, of last year's growth and of rocks...

The tips of the grasses pierce through the pure white snow, through its pure
white body, up towards the sky...
A joyous and fearful witness, as my own immense desire for you.

But the grass is pure white, quite quiet in the world,
and, past and unexclaimed, the moment is pure white and quite quiet.

I am pressed, pressed down in a pure white slumber.
I move towards the greenness of the grass, I dissolve into pure white.

AMITABHA

How should I, like Amitabha, cross my legs like a colorful flower?
How should I, like Amitabha, visualize you as the Buddha's essence, my
love?

How should I, like Amitabha, develop the secret at the center with my fingers?
How should I, like Amitabha, adorn a woman's waist with caragana peel?

How should I, like Amitabha, send my prayer to the root hidden deep within
the earth?

How should I, like Amitabha, ornament you with the nine precious stones?
How should I, like Amitabha, consider a girl sitting on a river bank after
bathing?

How should I, like Amitabha, see birdsong and a dog's bark and a girl's love
as the same?

How should I, like Amitabha, think the fading of leaves as my dream?
How should I, like Amitabha, say a horse standing up asleep is an ebbing
sea?

How should I, like Amitabha, say a growing embryo in a mother's womb is the
sea's tide?

How should I, like Amitabha, become a beautiful melody with my entire body?

How should I, like Amitabha, shine like the sun through a crack in the door?
How should I, like Amitabha, show like the moon peering through holes in the
clouds?

How should I, like Amitabha, dissipate in silence like a bird in flight?
How should I, like Amitabha, catch the sound as my falling hair hits the earth?

How should I like Amitabha, stay on this earth for aeons, though it's covered
with clouds and ice?

How should I, like Amitabha, feel death to be more meaningful than life?
How should I, like Amitabha, remain indifferent when a butterfly burns itself on
a candle?

How should I, like Amitabha, not cry when my mother's passes away?

How should I, like Amitabha, understand that a flower can destroy a bee?
How should I, like Amitabha, understand that one verse can destroy another?
How should I, like Amitabha, know that worlds exist in distant emptiness...?
How should I, like Amitabha, realize space and time and my own non-
existence...?

12 February 1992, ninth day of the Mongolian New Year.

THE SHADOW OF TURMOIL

Sin is a leaf upon the Bodhi tree, it rises from the mind,
or else is that which makes the mind.
Those who feel no mercy drink from sin,
they make no poems from the marsh-drowned vines.
The light did not wipe away the emptiness,
and, when the wheel and the spokes' shadows cease, the glorious
banners are so silken, this side of the clouds,
but outside myself...
In this place, as in fine pictures,
so many gazelles, running beside the waters...
The light and form of shadows are fleeting,
and I amble in thought,
like a dog who knows only its tail.
Shadows float over the granite rock,
above the blade of a whetted knife.
At the moment when a veiled woman's form appeared,
the grass moved to flatten me down.
I appear from the beautiful colored shadows,
a worm, a small type of worm.
The wind whistles and, whistling, it forces the clouds away,
it beats down the beaded, swooning, carigana.
A scream moves through the cosmos.
Hats are not secure, fire scatters from cigarettes,
and around my world there moves a star.
Nowhere is there a shadow,
and so nowhere is there a body.
And sinfulness, which feels no mercy,
dwells in that shadow which is the world's omnipresent soul.

29 October 1991, the day of the black monkey.

PERFECT WHITE FLOWERS

Previously I would write lovely poems,
I would often sing about a beautiful woman,
and down along the deep furrows, over the fine ridges,
I would row my palm, like a golden boat,
and previously I would write the loveliest of poems,
about how she stood there, elegant in the runnels.
And so I was creating these poems,
cutting open my rosy clothes beside the sea,
a white flash on the horizon,
the stern of a ship, weighing anchor,
and so I was creating these poems,
about how the gulls were absent there....
But now the spring ice was breaking up, and I
would go to the river, and know
what it was the girl was shouting as she drowned.
As we say of the space between birth and death,
the railway sleepers are so close...
and perfect and beautiful white flowers
are growing there, all beneath the traintracks.

22 March 1999

I am made
of round, round forms.
The candles cast shadows in groups
upon the light of the winter snow.
My own poetry
is a circle of white mist
and the grasses, and you are gone astray,
and I am like a lapdog.

27 December 1999
Ereentsav

It's eased off a bit, this rain,
and the wind, with watery patterns, moves the shirts and thin dresses.
In a gap, between the pouring rain,
I took off my clothes and looked from my body on the grass.

All around, the water glistens like a shattered mirror,
and with a crashing in the sky my wife gives birth to a son.
And in the white shimmer, all along the horizon,
I watch her biting a lemon...

A night of strange, strange dreams,
and the naked beauty of the dark moon.
The seal of its light is secure on the roofring,
and the wind howls, with the scent of wolves,
down the needle channels at the monastery's school.
A glass cup in Sodnom's hand
finds the transforming magic of rainbows.
The golden raisins on young girl's breasts
sour a drunkard's innards gently ...

29 November 1999

Now there is nobody
to speak to me of love...
In my memory,
in the watery sphere,
a beautiful woman
and my little yellow guitar
both sank that year
into the river.

IN THE BRIGHTNESS OF THE MOON

Like women putting tea into water,
the evening is coming,
and a thirsty little bird refreshes herself
at the door, and whistles.
I came down the saltmarsh,
looking upon
the shadow of the bush there, the embrace of the bush here.
As though there is something frightening
in the vague distance,
this peaceful and eternal situation
seemed to me
like a stone man, decapitated.
And in the brightness of the moon, the stray dogs
appeared
to be barking all the more...

June 1994

As humans pass away, unseen,
when golden leaves whistle in the raging autumn,
the land is whistling with golden leaves,
and I am not there.

At dawn, when the sleepy geese call,
in the dreams of the green grass,
like a moonbright woman,
the wind moves, and I follow.

In nature, before the downpour
on the horizon, crashing with thunder,
the gentle signs move amongst the flowers,
and I am not there.

At evening, in Ereentsav, the dogs are causing trouble and,
in the mists of dense wet clouds,
the wild horses running past,
I light a candle.

The golden waves of autumn are fluttering,
and the sunny ocean surging,
towards Natsagdorj's dark cliffs,
I sit and row
my boat of leaves...

Please ask
of the girls who are not with
Amitabha, the nuns of the eastern monastery,
where the bird-ewer floats upon the watermeadows,
where is the poet who is no longer here?

At midday in the heat of summer,
the eternal mountain snows
seem to glitter like pictures,
and nearby, beyond the borders,
they hide me away...

2 February 2000
Ereentsav

THINKING OF MY LOVE...
for Handmaa

The distant mists
hide you.
Tomorrow the great snows will have come,
but my sadness will be as before.

Here it was as it always was,
my wife wetnursing the cows.
The crops withered on the land,
and those whom we know grow fewer.

The ridged new moon at evening
seems strangely like a scythe.
The horizon rises up in the darkness,
and the ice flows on the rivers, like sugar in a bowl.

I think of the love which rises out of dreams,
and birds are calling in the south.
The strings on the shanz are tuned
and the yellow rain perfumed.

The gazelles are coming down,
deep in the forests it is midnight.
But the image of my love
appears in the mirror.

Do we yearn then, the dog and me
for my love, gone far away?
The dog is sorry,
and I am sad...

25 December 1983
Ereentsav

THIS SUMMER RIVER

Like a river
flow the girls' legs,
scented as though
with wild garlic.

And the jade
shines as water
beyond the smokey silken clothes,
like the rich full moon...

But below,
strange and powerful lotus flowers,
and around their shins, like carved ploughbeams,
loose white pearls slide and slip.

The creases of the poetic line,
tooth-marks and swan-neck saddle-bows,
sucking the dew by night,
on the lips of the lotus flower.

These many rivers I am
unable to change,
and in the cold winter season
only the fortunate fishes go far away...

More beautiful than those in the past,
this summer will not come back.
Like a picture of colored silk,
other rivers will not flow again.

I followed the rainbow dancing
of the doe, come into heat,
and I am drunk and drunk and dreaming,
and there is nothing but madness.

6 June 2001
Dornod