

Eight Poems by Paul Ilichko

The Decaying Fabric of the Financial System

I would have liked (*to sleep*) / while somewhere /
the fabric of time (*decayed*) / I want to be (*inside*) /
to have slept (*in a barn*) / (*or*) else within (*the universe*) /
(*while time*) was slowly / (*decaying*) on the inside /
in a barn / (*in*) the universe / decaying and integral.

(*I*) part my fingers / into wisdom / the drips / poured and /
(*measured*) like vertebrae / resilient as (*the tree*) /
its pollen / measured in / (*acreage*) pushing bone /
(*into*) the oak tree / (*covered*) in a golden rainfall /
(*that is poured and measured and in*) its own feckless way
ensnared / in opposition / (*to the inheritance*) of capital equity.

Red Flowers

A naked body subject to the dreadful intimacy of pain which at times outweighs even the dreadful pain of intimacy

red flowers growing darkly scattered like a wound

a nautilus embedded in ancient rock (as if there were such a thing as modern rock)

existence is an idol sitting on a shelf a portrait of infamy crooked in the barber shop

climb the staircase hand in hand then part like the Red Sea as if a wave that split asunder as if two ways on the roundabout as if the notch of a limb where failure is self-evident

sinking into hallucination as an excuse to avoid the repetition rooms your pale skin your fingers red flowers growing between your scattered thighs your nautilus your body naked like a wound

The Sea the Sea the Wave of Vibration

Noon relaxes into metal voice the rasp the rasp the undertone of steel on bone of throat as wavelength diving into pilgrimage

death being flagged no reference to utility no reference to compromise death as expected as the beaching of whale as shoreline receding to kelp

noon and ocean colored metal as silver or lead with sun or without sun the sleep of silence the profit of hush

waves are never where you think they are

a transference of energy in time and space

death as the point at which the wave breaks down from coherence into a spasm of ripples

the possibility that ripples have secondary effects tending to infinity within the vibration

here we ignore the flaws in mathematics

the science of energy transference as it relates to death as it relates to infinity as it relates to the ripple as it relates to vibration as determined by frequency

the structure of metal is the vibration

Weariness of Sand

The colorless ocean
the livid pericarp
perhaps more like a poem
than any other part of nature
unless the desert
red and bruised
beneath a burning sky
blasted by the burning wind
that forces the migration of sand

sand that infiltrates
into every crevice

the membrane
having been pierced

the town ghostly from sand
that curdles stale as milk
in every corner the air become
as gauze softening the edges
of trees as the town collapses
into exhaustion

a tiredness deep as bone

Sugar Hell

Run into the sugar cane shack
run and holler like hell
the long grass the sugar grass
the tar paper baby crying
the black water running
behind the knife-cut shade
the sign of the shadow's edge
injustice as a blade
that cuts a swathe through sugar
cane and leads you on down
to where the boats rock gently
on a dark forgotten lake
on the rippling surface tension
where the sugar water seeps
and tries its best to sweeten
the blackness of raw sewage
and if you've ever seen the land
where sugar babies die
then tell me where your country ends
and where this one begins.

The Fleet Arrives in Beijing

You thought "kindling"
as the fire blazed
you thought "angled like slate
in monochrome" as on a sunless
morning a schoolbag day
took flight across
the weed-choked tracks

where imaginary tigers
stormed lightning beneath
silk stockings where china girls
stretched nude and ornamental
where sailors scratched their balls
the anchor tossed
the coffee gulped

a bottled celebration
of dark and scattered
impact the harlots
of Tiananmen crowded
the fading petals
and measured the bullish reality
of craving's cruelty.

A "How To" of Birdsong

Skin of pigeon flesh so lovely with mottled
of gray and blue and all the colors
of the evening sky as birds control it

birds of solvent sky that must be seen
embracing life

embracing sex and death and sex again

embracing longer lines of birds that angle
from expected shape and flicker
and reshape the static

beneath the shapes you stand furious
in your ornithology eschewing the vision
that is sold of clean and connected singing
in always longer lines that fade
and dwindle into nothing like the birds
of autumn's breathing

singing juxtaposed in lines with truth
in parallel with the taste of smell
the traces of accessory some other
domain regretfully unfound

the universal bloodstain fitfully smeared
around the letter "O"

where trunks diverge

as space expands

the penetration of the system

into birdsong

Wooden

You say “wood” but there are so many different woods you say “the odor of wood” but every wood smells differently

compare the hardness of oak against the softness of maple

a ream of paper ready for use

a cord of wood stacked and covered

the drying wood as moisture evaporates from its surface there where you left your muddy boots

wood chips on the trail accelerating drainage

a silver light shines through the window at midnight a lunar efflorescence lighting the wooden floors between the deep black shadows cast by furniture where only the cats are seen to prowl

the heavy wood of the Nakashima table thickly grained within the slice of walnut as much of art as it is of utility

we walk through the woods — another usage — overgrown with color the green of leaf the delicate white of flower and soon the redness and the ochre bursting out as summer fades away and winter’s frozen promise beckons

and here we come upon the turret of the old Victorian house rising tall above the stands of trees silver-lit beneath a waxing moon

the house wood-framed with heavy lumber

the ironbound strength of wooden doors belies the soft erosion of the window frames

inside the house we climb the polished beechwood staircase where high above a light is seen to flicker from below a shuttered door

within the child at her piano lesson filling the house with music as she presses gently on the spruce-wood keys