

〔創 作〕

## Amherst Poems (I)

by

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*The poems below are some of the works I wrote during my stay in Amherst, Massachusetts, USA between April 2009 and March 2010. Most of them are personal and I felt some hesitation for publishing, but they may be worth as showing true feelings and emotions because they are the records and reflections of the life of a visitor in Amherst.*

### Touching Emily Dickinson

What is this gooseflesh I get now,  
Standing at the roots of huge trees,  
Looking up at the house called the Homestead?  
The house is, of course, where Emily Dickinson lived.

Far away, travelling 20,000 miles from Nagoya,  
I stand now at the threshold of your house.  
The gooseflesh is the way I feel poetry.  
For you, that was a head chopped off  
Or the coldness that got into your body.

The house is not so big and old,  
Well kept, too immaculate to be haunted, maybe;  
No dust and smudge;  
It is only 120 years since you died, Emily.

Torn apart by greediness, your piano is now at Harvard,  
Looking for a player - you - in the darkness.  
The drawer you hid your winged ideas is not real either. What is real?  
And how can I feel you were real here?

The west-facing room is not so large nor much decorated,

But specklessly clean and bright.  
No one can tell how many times you saw the setting sun.

On the wall, two portraits were hung: Emily Bronte and George Eliot.  
Like them, fame was hard to come by for you,  
But you escaped before it almost came to you.

From a tiny cherry tree desk, you made a world;  
Only blessed poets know who are the blessed.  
You were so pale, your friend said, but now you are  
More invisible in your room.

Did you really live in this room and write those poems?  
Why are you so invisible?

(Brooding on, I tread your way to your graveyard in West Cemetery.)

Your tombstone shows what death can be,  
Opening a door for me to reach for you.  
When a lid is covered over a coffin,  
People begin to live.

Touching your tombstone with my hand,  
I feel you for the first time.  
The stone is neither warm nor cold.  
Visitors place coins and pebbles on your head,  
But are these what you wanted? —Pebbles of undying human sadness.

Oh, Emily, the sunlight is too bright today,  
And the breeze is mild and fragrant.  
As you lived, you got much out of your life,  
But most of us are overburdened with the facts of life.

Between this and that world, you have lived  
And I feel you now at your graveyard.  
—Vision of immortality, voice of death.

A dead man needs only a small square lot to bury.  
Your graveyard is also small, smaller than your ancestors'.  
Yet how large is your world!  
Now your poetry rings like a high noon bell, spreading over the countless vales.

An evergreen tree shedding a shadow over you is shining  
With the warm light of spring afternoon sun.  
Awakened by the large sound of my own gravel steps

I now leave your place in peace.

## Norwottuck Trail

A long trail, which goes from Amherst to Northampton,  
Where the Norwottuck Indians used to live,  
Still passes through swamps and creeks,  
Echoing the ancient days they hunted and fished.

Through the bushes and woods, now do the trains rumble,  
Shaking the leaf-covered winter woods with piercing thunders.

Where were the Indians gone?

On this land they lived, generation after generation,  
But their traces are hard to find.  
High above the bushes the wind passes through the pine twigs,  
Mumbling sad, ageless words.

In the swamps beavers make dikes;  
Their homes are just like Indian mounds or tombs.  
They bite down trees from time to time,  
As if the number would count the passage of time.

At dusk, birds are chirping here and there,  
Whose sounds echo with the pee-wees of frogs,  
Like autumn cicadas, spreading on the crystal water,  
Now stained with the golden dots of the western sky.

The water of the swamps does not move; on it only the sounds flow.  
So still, and it seems it has been like this for many centuries.  
Beneath the water, fallen leaves and trees are covered with mud,  
Stored, undecayed.

On the asphalt trail men and women jog or bike;  
They do not care how time is nestled in the swamps.  
A bird's piercing cry resounds suddenly from a tall tree,  
But the swamps and woods are quiet

Who knows from the bottom of the swamps, sometimes,  
A few babbles come up to the surface of the water,  
Sighing unknown  
secrets?

## K. C. Trail

a  
tall tree  
hidden in the bush  
dreamily flourishing  
with countless white blossoms  
sucked by thousand bugs in the warm  
spring light among the fluffy seeds of wild poplars  
floating on the wind like shining snow flakes  
stands  
hailed  
by a  
blue  
bird  
passing  
through the floral-scented woods of K. C. Trail

## A Wedge

Driven into boredom, a fiery wedge rants,  
Clanging the bell of old fair,  
Thrusting into the marrow of life,  
To open to the other side of air.

O Dreadful, sinister powder  
Falling to paralyze into ignorance and comfort;  
A pang peeps and gapes and yawns.

A wedge, born to bore;  
If power and life still exist,  
To hurt, to strike, and to beat  
A new air.

A life has periods,  
Bubble, beat, and burst, all right.  
Is the new beat true?  
Be what it may, it has to be.

Joys and tears may be shared finally.  
A wedge is at hand,  
Cut the tie, to be alone,

To see, what will be will be.

## Sophie

From morning till night the voice echoes in the woods, far and forlorn,  
Sophie, Sophie, Sophie,  
It sounds as if seeking for a lost lover.

Who or what sings?  
It is not seen; hidden in leaves.  
Could it be a sprite, a gnome, or a bird?

*Tous les jours l'oiseau chante Sophie.*

Philomela lost her tongue,  
But as a bird she got her voice;  
Singing not the song of rancor but a sweet serenade.  
Could there be grudge?  
Resignation and forgetfulness are companies.

*Tous les jours l'oiseau chante Sophie.*

The voice comes from the wounded soul;  
Does time heal it? Compunction only increases its dark shadow.  
Then, where will the doomed soul go?

*Tous les jours l'oiseau chante Sophie.*

Oblivion, a bliss hard to get, hides behind the time's eyelids;  
Only desire prods life a further bit,  
And the shadow fades into a solid memory.

*Tous les jours l'oiseau chante Sophie.*

## A Cocoon in the U-Mass Library

Swung by the north wind roaring  
A cocoon is going to hatch in a high tower.  
Leaves are abundant, new and ancient,  
To be nibbled anytime.  
Popcorns and chocolate crumbs are full,

Littered on floors and in baskets;  
Gums are glued on dusty desks,  
Making the whole room moldy for hibernation.

A cocoon is going to hatch  
Blinded without desk lamps,  
Promising some like moles go into nearsighted fields.  
Da, da, tin, the noises of elevators sound  
Like a micro-oven  
Or the thump of a guillotine.  
PCs, microfilms, and e-books. You name it.  
Things are ready; so come out of it,  
Into this world of unbalance.

Swung by the north wind roaring  
A cocoon is going to hatch in a high tower.

### Pro Patria

On the Amherst College's hillside,  
Facing the green mountain range of Mount Holyoke  
Lies the memorial site of the former students,  
Who dedicated their lives in wars:  
New Guinea, Okinawa, Normandy, Schweinfurt, Argonne . . . .  
On the round concrete monument,  
Their names are carved like a newly minted coin,  
With the large stony motto of Pro Patria.  
For their country they ran to recruit.  
For a human ideal, they gave their life.

Yet did the men listen to the cries of mothers and daughters?  
Where does the milk of maternal lamentation flow?  
What would have happened if they  
Had Pro Patria in mind?

I dropped a crumb of my lunch bread on the ground.  
Soon some very tiny ants gathered on it;  
And at the same time a big black ant came,  
And they began to fight.  
The small ants bit the weak points of the big ant,  
Which convulsed for seconds but not fatal.  
In revenge, the big ant caught some ants and torn them into halves.  
The fight went on and off, but the big ant, biting the crumb a little finally,

Showed no interest, and left.  
On the ground were left some bodies,  
Sunlit in the May wind.

Pro patria, surely, man may need something to live for.  
But what is this cold face?  
Did your sons really have it in their hearts?  
Didn't they cry for water or for mothers or for lovers?

Pro matris, pro matris, pro matris,  
Hear the far cries of the earth.  
They were not born to die young,  
They were not born to break their mothers' hearts,  
They were not born to bleed for stony ideals.  
How many teardrops have shed because of old fanatics?

In the woods beyond, birches, elms, oaks, maple, and pine trees  
All mingle in peace, sharing leafy spaces,  
Painting the mountain ranges with colorful dots.

Pro matris, pro matris, pro matris,

Hear the cries of the earth,  
The voice that rises up from the earth.  
Hear the truth of the earth,  
The truth that lies in the ancient vein of maternal heart.

The sunlight is now warm on the desolate monument,  
And the breeze passes through the leaves of tall pine trees,  
Murmuring the endless and almost inaudible sounds  
Of the quiet earth.

## My Pillow

"Our son always sleeps with your pillow," my wife says.  
Holding my pillow, he falls asleep  
Quiet, breathing with inaudible breaths,

Clinching on a buoy, small yet sure,  
As the waves of night ebb and flow,  
Riding his dream to endless darkness.

On a big and thick pillow,

Smelly of my hair,  
My son is lulled on a memory,  
Safe and sound.

Good night, good night, my son, rest asleep.  
The night is deep, but hold my hand  
And squeeze my shoulder and head.  
Have no fear and set sail with your cheeks billowed  
By the wind of a whitening morning.

### A Pumpkin

The longer you live,  
The more you get  
The worldly grime;  
Carved with scars,  
Crusted with vanity,  
Dormant constantly in dreamy ignorance.

Yet chances are not scarce  
To be sweetened,  
If nature allows,  
Like an old pumpkin,  
Scorched by the summer sun,  
Rinsed by autumn rain,  
Bit by frost.  
It gets ripe in time.  
And if fortunate,  
The seeds become  
Mellow enough  
To be used  
For the next harvest.