

I'm Not a Poet

.....Beware, beware!

*His flashing eyes and floating hair.
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes in holy dread,
For he on honey dew hath fed
And drunk the milk of paradise*

At school I was always told
I could never be a poet.
A poet was someone whose eyes
were made differently from ours,
who saw God, or Nature, or Beauty
in the street among the traffic,
who lived in other worlds than this
or in a land called Imagination
where words grew like unheard-of fruit
in strange new colours,
who sipped tea through the exquisite filter
of a refined sensibility, and didn't take sugar,
whose wrecked life earned immortality
as Suffering transmuted into Art,
whose shopping list always rhymed.

Nobody wove a circle round me once;
our milk came bottled from the Express Dairy,
honeydew was melon we had as a treat
but the pips never made me speak poetry
and, try as I might, the world I knew
kept coming back when I told it to go away.
My words tripped over themselves
or were already bought and sold like bruised apples,
my eyes needed glasses to see anything much;
nothing on our shopping list rhymed.

But sometimes, even though I was not a poet,
the light filled me, and then I saw.
My sensibility became sensible;
my words spoke from the soles of my feet.
Then I needed sunglasses to cover my flashing eyes
and my school hat to hold down my floating hair.

Elaine Taylor