

Wandering Jew

(Wilhelm Reich, who died in prison of heart disease,
and I who followed him)

Where shall I put my feet?
Where lay my head?
What ground for rootless days and sleepless nights?

I am haunted by memories.
Love, and violence
And heart cut to the bone.
And all my bitter rage, my hated self
Exposed, turned inside out.

This is open heart surgery:
The inner subtle flesh on view
To the cold staring eye.

Where now that flicker
That once seemed my heart?
Small flame: pilot light
For all my passions.
Where's the warm pulse,
Dear throb of loving?
My hopeless, hope-awakened
Small self: my me.
How should I protect it unprotected?

And what price my passionate blood?
Heart retreats
Hurt flesh recoils
Irritably: feels bad.
Dead, and tormentedly alive.
Blood surges to skin and shrinks back.
Heart, blood and skin cannot agree
And my Shylock surgeon self hovers vindictively.

Other hands touch me
Embrace, love gently, heal softly
And only rouse my pain of hardness.
Go away.
I don't want charity. Christian charity.
The rootless, sleepless me keeps going
Longs for rest
Trust no-one.

My heart beats on.
Hopeful. Hopeless.
Life. Unlife.
Doing. Keeping going
This is the survivor.

Listen
Where is that flicker?
Listen to the silence.
Patient
Poised
In the stillness
Between the blood-beats
This same heart waits also.
Trusts itself.
Waits for its own unfolding
Enlightening
For the love, the loving, the homecoming
Forgiven and forgiving,
Melting, radiant, lambent.

Between my hopeful and hopeless
My life and unlife
The impassionate, impersonal
Reconciliation.

This was so long forgotten.
My threatened body
Hating its prison
Ghetto-held
Lusting for life
Passionate for fertility
Body obsessed
Sex-desperate
Denied the Virgin Mother
Was never comforted.
Dispirited. Disheartened.
Heart, blood, flesh
Never reconciled.

Of what were you jealous, God?

It is my heart that waits, trusting itself.
My spirit has waited: two thousand years.
Patience is all.

Alix Pirani