

Democracy

See in the city the desolate woman  
Taken for a tramp – clothes weather-faded -- threadbare  
She walks with care on broken shoes  
Her young face worn  
Her bony arm clutching the sleeping infant boy  
She leads the young girl by the hand –  
their narrow pensive wrists  
About her (the man is dead) the roar and sneer of city traffic  
proclaiming its importance  
In shop doorways – stone clefts – and on open streets –  
chattering mobiles  
The fire-crackle of newsprint crushing itself  
The raucous rant of radios  
The fluttering wings of wounded birds and drunken angels  
The ghosts displaying wares in windows  
Her walking is the measured dance of stones  
Her veins the jagged lines of clear perception:  
the iron tongue of history  
She has no hope to beg  
Passers-by do not see the wind seeks shelter in her rags  
She is un-regarded  
Uncared for  
Unrecognised  
Unknown  
She is democracy  
And carries in her mind the graves of those who died  
touching her hand -- once multitudes --  
And urns of fear

How Else Shall It be Said ?

Through that window  
The rot of gold  
Crimson splodges  
The shield is wounded  
Then the tree trunks  
The flaking planes  
The fissured plated oaks  
The wood is not walked  
Instead the early-winter light shoulders past itself  
In the field grass grows over the war ditches --  
withers or is cropped by kine --  
and the beast draws marrow from its bone  
The steam of laundry in poor kitchens  
People gnaw themselves  
The day comes in its coffin and we  
shall fill it with ripe plenty  
We tread the severity of the earth and the wrath of time  
is upon us  
Then come – here – now – stand on the white hewn slab --  
or the cobbles which are wept-marble --  
of the town square  
The actor in the white shift-shirt raises his arm high over  
his head – the red gauntlet of knitted wool --  
take one more step and he is gone  
Freedom and dread are joined and parted by an ache  
In the moment of birth we are promised death  
In the moment of the self the shadows are made white  
and we are possessed by justice

*for Rene*

*my colleague + friend  
with best wishes for 2007*

*Edward*