

paddy webb

to Anaïs Nin

*Anaïs: in your soft white
nipped dress, ample oval
belly, and expressive hands,
your face shining earnestly,
eyes seeking first one person, then
another — not like an audience —*

*how did you ever come back
from that journey within?*

*when
you came face to face with ghosts
of your former selves, how dare
you address them, or look them
in the eye?*

*did they fasten
on?*

*how could you bear to shake
them off, how unhook fingers
replicas of your own, resist
that tugging at your heart-strings?*

*what luggage you unburdened,
each carefully monogrammed,
pricked out in gold-leaf, stippled
in silver tongues forgotten
now*

*what ways you tried to come through,
dressed in your own simple skin,
your unscaled eyes perceiving
the quick depths of others*

*you turn adroitly away
from the banal, refusing
to generalize, looking at
each particular moment
caught in its clear amber drop*

*over seventy now, yet
perennially young, what hope
you bring with you, and share out
undiminished — a widow's cruse —
to oil the stiff joints of our loves*

*small hours:
(a birth poem)*

*so the night passes
morning comes as it always does
fragments of dark stick to the wires
day filters into the bowl
and light splinters the glass*

silence creeps to the corners

it is exactly five o'clock

*inside it is raining
spattering in windy gusts
slowly, gently bleeding*

this will pass this will pass

*the walnut shrivels in the shell
the snail's path of silver dries
the yolk hardens in the egg
the hands of the clock move
at one minute past five
your head appears at the door —
one heave and you're through
brick-red in your coat of white fat*

this will pass this will pass

*already the next drop of time
slips to the rim of the glass
and is shattered by your lusty cry*

*was i good?
what do you mean by good?*

*you used to ask me to judge
your peeing competitions - -
adjudicate trajectories - -
i had to lie in the dust
take a bead on the stone wall
and decide whose yellow stream
travelled furthest*

sometimes

*those parabolic arches broke
in rainbow fragments the sun's
motes they passed through*

being

*a girl i could not enter
but had a kind of power
to upset the male ego
my decision being
absolute*

*now you ask me to decide
relative ejaculating
power and size of penises
to fuck and satisfy, not
urinate*

again the power

*to emasculate is mine
but the childhood game
came easier*