

Alice Jones

Darkling I listen

Death is nature's remedy for all things." (Dickens) The end of all stories is death, which is where time stops short. Sheherezade knew this, which is why she kept on spinning

another story out of the bowels of the last one, never coming to a point where she could say: "This is the end." Because it would have been. (Angela Carter) . . . not the worst

that can happen to men. (Plato) I want Death to find me planting my cabbages, neither worrying about it nor the unfinished gardening. (Montaigne) The story-teller . . .

has borrowed his authority from death. (Walter Benjamin) An old joke, but each individual encounters it anew. (Turgenev) . . . is only a launching into the region of the strange Untried;

it is but the first salutation to the possibilities of the immense Remote, the Wild, the Watery, the Unshored. (Melville) Leave death to the professionals. (Graham Greene) Death is hacking

away at my address book and party lists. (Mason Cooley) Liberal hopefulness regards death as a mere border to an improving picture. (William Empson) Death is not an event in life:

we do not live to experience death. (Wittgenstein) . . . is no more than passing from one room into another. But there's a difference for me, you know. Because in that other room

I shall be able to see. (Helen Keller) The death . . . of a beautiful woman, is unquestionably the most poetical topic in the world. (Edgar Allan Poe) How I envy you death;/ what could

death bring,/more black, more set with sparks/to slay, to affright,/ than the memory of those first violets. (H. D.) Great is my envy of death whose curt hard sword carried her

whom I called my life away; (Petrarch) Old age is life's parody, whereas death transforms life into a destiny: in a way it preserves it by giving it the absolute dimension... Death does away

with time. (Simone De Beauvoir) Death unites as well as separates; it silences all paltry feeling. (Balzac) . . . the sound of distant thunder at a picnic. (W. H. Auden) Death hath had a thousand

doors to let out life, I shall find one . (Philip Massinger) I know death hath ten thousand several doors/For men to take their exits. (John Webster) Suffering and fear are born from the repression

of the death wish. (Ionesco) All societies on the verge of death are masculine. (Germaine Greer) The day of my birth, my death began its walk. It is walking toward me, without hurrying. (Cocteau)

All good biography, as all good fiction, comes down to the study of original sin, of our inherent disposition to choose death when we ought to choose life. (Rebecca West) When

the body sinks into death, the essence of man is revealed. Man is a knot, a web, a mesh into which relationships are tied. . . The body is an old crock that nobody will miss. (Saint-Exupéry)

It's not that I'm afraid to die, I just don't want to be there when it happens. (Woody Allen) There was one of two things I had a right to, liberty, or death; if I could not have one, I would take

the other; for no man should take me alive; (Harriet Tubman) Birth was the death of him.(Beckett) The sea is mother-death and she is a mighty female, the one who wins, the one who sucks us

all up. (Anne Sexton) And I thank my God for graciously granting me the opportunity... of learning that death is the key which unlocks the door to our true happiness. (Mozart) It was

a time when only the dead smiled, happy in their peace./Stars of Death stood over us,/and innocent Russia squirmed under the bloody boots. (Akmatova) The call of death is the call

of love. Death can be sweet if we answer it in the affirmative, if we accept it as one of the great eternal forms of life and transformation. (Hermann Hesse) Darkling I listen;

and for many a time I have been half in love with easeful Death. (John Keats) The idea of enemies is awful it makes one stop remembering eternity and the fear of death. . .

Possessions are the same as enemies only less so, they too make one forget eternity and the fear of death. (Gertrude Stein) In every parting there is an image of death. (George Eliot) Death

is a master from Germany. (Celan) For them that think death's honesty/Won't fall upon them naturally/Life sometimes/ Must get lonely. (Bob Dylan) What do I know of man's destiny?

I could tell you more about radishes. (Beckett) . . . a Dialogue between,/The Spirit and the Dust. (Emily Dickinson) Death is terrifying, but it would be even more terrifying to find out

that you are going to live forever and never die. (Chekhov) Sport in the sense of a mass-spectacle, with death to add to the underlying excitement, comes into existence when

a population has been drilled and regimented and depressed to such an extent that it needs at least a vicarious participation in difficult feats of strength or skill or heroism in order to sustain

its waning life-sense. (Lewis Mumford) I need my little addiction to you./I need that tiny voice who,/even as I rise from the sea,/all woman, all there,/says kill me, kill me./ (Sexton)

The aims of life are the best defense against death. (Primo Levi) Being an old maid is like death by drowning, a really delightful sensation after you cease to struggle. (Edna Ferber)

In the attempt to defeat death man has been inevitably obliged to defeat life. (Henry Miller) At death, you break up: the bits that were you/Start speeding away from each other

for ever/With no one to see. (Philip Larkin) I used to think of death ... like I suppose soldiers think of it: it was a possible thing that I could well avoid by my skill. (Stendhal) And really,

the reason we think of death in celestial terms is that the visible firmament, especially at night (above our blacked-out Paris with the gaunt arches of its Boulevard Exelmans and

the ceaseless Alpine gurgle of desolate latrines), is the most adequate and ever-present symbol of that vast silent explosion. (Nabokov) Bullfighting is the only art in which the artist

is in danger of death. (Hemingway) You didn't feel there was anything you ever could enjoy again because you really were immersed in death. Other people seemed shallow. You felt

a strong allegiance to the dead. (Joan Furey, military nurse in Vietnam) Everything tends to make us believe that there exists a certain point of the mind at which life and death, the real and

the imagined, past and future, the communicable and the incommunicable, high and low, cease to be perceived as contradictions. (André Breton) As long as I have a want, I have a reason

for living. Satisfaction is death. (George Bernard Shaw) There is no such thing as inner peace. There is only nervousness or death. (Fran Lebowitz). . . the mother of beauty, mystical,/Within

whose burning bosom we devise/ Our earthly mothers waiting, sleeplessly. (Wallace Stevens) Death can only be profitable: there's no need to eat, drink, pay taxes, offend people, and since

a person lies in a grave for hundreds or thousands of years, if you count it up the profit turns out to be enormous. (Chekhov) Do not speak like a death's-head, do not bid me remember

mine end. (Shakespeare) Death is the king of this world: 'tis his park/Where he breeds life to feed him. (George Eliot) No stout/Lesson showed how to chat with death. We brought/No brass

fortissimo, among our talents,/To holler down the lions in this air. (Gwendolyn Brooks) That's all the facts when you come to brass tacks:/ Birth, and copulation, and death. (T.S. Eliot)

Tongue

Words fail me. Birds assail me. Fords tail me. Murders in jail. We can't afford sails. Third rail-- whee! Theater of the absurd. Now calm down.

Oceanic mania, that peculiar elevation of expanse in tune with the vast ballooning of internal energies which glow and spill over into excesses

of verbiage without shape, urge without object, me-ness without limit, no salt on the tail, centrifugal and upwards. Did we go there? Syntax, syrxinx,

non sequitur, sex: a single synapse. Zap. When really, the axons and dendrites interconnect with delicate non-touch, the small chemical boats set sail

in the dark cleft, unpack themselves of the far shore and memory occurs. A plum drops off the tree into your open palm. What I loved about "syrinx"

was the overlaying of meaning: panpipes, a bird's vocal organ, narrow corridor of an Egyptian tomb, a fluid-filled tubular cavity in the spinal cord

as in syringomyelia. Let's sing. Because we can still walk. Up right, like creatures of our kind, and go visit the underground gallery's opening. Hieroglyphics

in orange and blue, unlike the alphabet, leave room for imagination's twists, interpretations, more so pre-Rosetta stone. The grave/the song, so tight,

entrance to the soul's hollow, breath's music was hidden in the sigh, the full throat's echo, tube into innards, pink tree, white cords, gristled chords.

Kurds hail me. Swords flail bees. Curtail repartee. (corkwood tree, coral sea, purple pea, tolerable degree) Towards Wounded Knee. White-whale spree.

Are we all on board? Old ones naming what you should've known. Sewn seeds of character, four short strokes in the calligrapher's horse. Gallop out of the mouth on a long low note, then skatter, skat, the spoken note-speak of the jazzy-tongued, hoof-beats mean zebras, phoneme means sense, word means breath shaped into one mouthful articulated by consonants, air/palate, genioglossus, pharyngoglossus, papillae for sweet, sour, salty, bitter, narrow pharynx down into the darkness, bifurcation of breath and liquid, two routes to nowhere. What goes in, what comes out, utterance or nonsense, the owl and the pussycat, an articulate caterpillar, the far wind, and black sails, the ones they forgot to change so he jumped off the cliff, reading the signal of his son's death. Is the tongue a mother or a father? Muscular utterance. Hamlet -- "For murder, though it have no tongue, will speak with most miraculous organ." Echolalia: a psychotic mimicry. Coprolalia: shit-talk. Glossolalia: speaking in tongues, a fluent going on, un-understandable, channeled from the other side, an automatic writing from the oral cavity. Anna O. babbling in sentences made of infinitives in four languages, had to be "relieved of her imaginative products daily," by Breuer, (Studies in Hysteria). She invented the name for this— "talking cure." What can be spoken into the notch of an empty cloud? Body urging upward mind's intent, play, reach into old time's root and rift, the swift footed tongue precedes all sense, rosy, slippery creature of quirky purpose, murders the words' blank gold.