

RESPONSES

In the middle of protesting
I was haunted
by the ludicrous scope of the words
by the final note of "end" and "no"
by mistake we were repeating.

I remembered the glow of a man I knew
Who'd made America a place for me
Who'd risked his life for the same word "free"
And had medals to show

I remembered the glow of a little girl
At the stories of the one who never came back
The place that carries his name now
The way his mother was so proud
And he died a marine.

I remembered a slogan they carried then
A-war-to-end-all-wars they said
Reason enough for the number of dead
(and the marchers were ready for trouble)

We're fighting to put an end to war
We're fighting to end the unjust one
We're wanting to bring our boys home
We're wanting to be left alone
We're wanting a cause, a reason to live
and if we must, a reason for dying.

Protest rang false
But Revolution rang true
In the eyes of the few
who were moved and not moving

When in the course of human events it becomes necessary:
Before necessity
Before the reason courting
Before the fact
Say: rennet running in the blood
Say: sweat
Say God, if you must
But get clear the question before we start the answer
Get clear the breathing behind the cause
Listen to skin
Ask questions of pulsing
Take history from the playing of seven year olds
and comprehend hate
When in the course of human events men make declarations
Necessity's already spun out its story
The words photograph it
The verb tense is past
The only present is the pulsing of tension
No late retributions
The time is come.

Realize that the reason isn't in the future
Realize the present is begotten of the past
Realize revolution evades the grand solution
The history of the fight is written in the fighting
The justification is running in the bleeding
The end of the struggle is the sound of the battle
The beginning is written in the childhood of foes.
After injustices
After pride
After disappointments and bitterness
After frustration mounts to a tension
An explosion—is the climax
And the denouement is words and rebuilding
and a scramble for causes
a scramble for the minds that got lost in the battle
that all got forgotten by the passionate believers
that all were excited out of existence



Now get working on history's results
discovering honor for the conscience of the victor
discovering the sins of the ones who lost
Now make rational the colors of passion
to teach school children
to write books
to understand

When there's blood spilled all over your lap
and you feel its redness
Do you deny the way your tongue is itching for it
Do you get down on your knees and let it run into the ground
so God can hear it?
Do you pour it back into the body that is flowing?
Do you lay your blood beside it
or run for a laundramat?
(and why do we have time enough for decisions anyway?)
When there's blood spilled all over your lap
You feel its redness

But we're—this tradition span—men of action and decision
So we make plans
and we plan for the execution of plans
and we plan out schedules to insure our plans
and we plan architecture to enclose our plans
and we plan philosophies to justify plans
and it works
till we plan across someone else's plan
and encounter
Frustration.

it's the restriction that's the only
bad thing you know I mean I dig
america at least you're freer here
than you are in those communist
countries I mean they let you read
what you want within reason of
course they even let you read
Marx we studied it in philosophy
and there are certain
responsibilities that come with
being a citizen I mean they can't
just let everybody go wild and do
anything they want like taxes if
you're to have roads and schools
and stuff you have to pay taxes of
course they are too high but that's
just because of the war once they
get that straightened out
everything will be ok there's a lot
to complain about but why
disrupt the whole country sure
there's a lot of corruption and all
that but look at our progress
we're the richest nation in the
world and the most advanced of
course there's the poverty thing
but they've got programs for that
all of these things you know the
war and the draft and the black
thing they're doing something
about it all once it's all
straightened out everything will
be ok I mean what do we want
with a revolution anyway even if
it could happen here where's it
gonna get us

Where in hell are we choosing to go?
You can tremble, man
be as ugly as you can
and spit a gapers from the bottom of your bottle
or the dark of your dreams
or the end of your bed
You can hide if you want to
in a cloud of smoke
or a dither of reason
or behind some trees in meditation
We all have a dark place all our own
where we get away that's efficiently far
where we go insane according to thumbprints
where we'd want to stay—away from the clatter
if it weren't so educational being alone
We march back
to commit ourselves
to deal with issues
to settle things
and be rational
and be practical
and be successful
and all

Then there's love
that makes a meaning of bittersweet
making tears of every accidental touch
winding tenderness into a conversation



it picks the lightest colors of the spring
to fill the dark expectancy of autumn with a smile
and makes smiles bright as innocent daisies
growing where they don't belong
it imitates the heavy beat of August
with the fierce delight in seeing certain eyes
and lies deep beneath the cool of eyes in waiting
it borrows promises of every April teardrop
and even when denied by men
it paints a blush on snow bound flower petals
and itches up the dancing of the bees
But there is no love like they're telling me about
when I'm worshipping on altars and graves and streets
There is no love like they're wanting
You can try all you want for a god-broad world
but everything will melt into hating
Discrimination!
Beautiful—
it gives my love a meaning
Toleration—
Beautiful!
it gives caring rest
Hate!
Is it ugly?
Then give me ugly hating
and I'll ugly up my loving for the things I detest
and instruct my mind to leave my heart alone.

I want to be together
to know what piece belongs and where it fits.
What form
What formless space
What dark infinity of measure sums me up
Where
in this too familiar universe
can I stop finding pieces of myself
and places where my self belongs?
Can't I stop making choices?
Can't I stop spreading thin?
Can't I find me a perimeter to hide in?
Can't there be a hallow region where my presence doesn't count?
Can't there be a human game where I'm out?
Isn't there an end to freedom and responsibility?
Isn't there a breathing space that isn't me?

When there's blood spilled all over your lap
And Revolution's shouting over your shoulder
and men are dying
When there's a logic to every cruelty
and beauty in the horror of war
and men are laughing
When there's self destruction panting through the streets
and men are tearing at the roots of life
and men are loving
As the rising chaos catches for a breath
As the world is falling down around our ears
As the smell of rotting harbingers the winter
and reason fails
Kick an answer through the fallen leaves
Whisper close
I am I am

Alice Therrien