

## As with a Tempest So with Love

*the longing to merge*  
- Lou Andreas-Salomé

1

*As with a tempest so with love, it blows itself out.*  
People can remain faithful if their elemental passions  
aren't involved: crimes of passion happen  
but passionate marriage is a contradiction in terms.

The choice is between sacrificing one's wholeness  
or becoming unfaithful — keeping in mind  
that unfaithful need not mean betrayal if  
for instance one leaves one not for another but for oneself.

2

*Sexual love is first and foremost a physical need*  
*like hunger and thirst, an animalistic force pure*  
*and simple* except in man it's combined with mental effects  
associated with nervous excitement which leads  
to romantic idealization of love then demands  
that it be permanent — eternal faithfulness  
from those we love even when we know in reality  
all animal needs are quickly appeased so clamor  
for change and requited love dies of satiation,  
habitual performances deaden the stimuli  
thereby increasing the need for novel inputs.

Since instincts are subject to the law of diminishing returns  
it follows she said that the natural love life in all  
its manifestations (and maybe in its highest forms most of all)  
is based on the infidelity principle.  
If the two are entirely serious with this  
most transitory act, demand no loyalty  
but are content with each other's happiness, they live  
while it lasts in a state of divine madness: love  
is elemental, to try to conserve it unrealistic.

3

Underlying the urge is desire for total union  
(*total surrender* she called it and *the unity of being*)  
which in humans (for anatomical reasons) must be  
partial and often, because partial, accompanied  
by a sense of shame and, coincidental with the desire to merge,

a heightened sense of one's own existence;  
so *every love leaves a positive surplus*.

4

It was her spontaneity said one, her mind,  
the way she anticipated one's every thought.

There is with her said one no trace as with most women  
of any quick judgment or prejudgment yet she is  
a typical woman in wanting not to reflect when she loves.

I have never met anyone else in all my long life  
said one who understood me so quickly so well  
and so completely. And then her almost startling frankness:  
she would discuss her most intimate private affairs with nonchalance.

I do not pay compliments to those I respect said one  
but she is a gem I hope not to harm by saying so.

She could be very passionate only for a moment said one  
and with a strangely cold passion. Nietzsche was right  
when he called her an evil woman but evil in the Goethean sense:  
evil that produces good. One grew in her presence.

There was something terrifying about her embrace  
said one: elemental archaic ruthless yet pious.  
*The reception of the semen she said is the height of ecstasy  
for me* and for it she had an insatiable appetite.  
Conscience she said is weakness.

Never again said one have I experienced such a feeling  
of conciliatory kindness (or call it compassion if you wish).

She could never give herself completely said one not even  
in the most passionate embrace (and then she was by no means  
cold). She talked about it but could not do it. She was  
in the deepest meaning of the word an unredeemed woman.

A sybil in the realm of the spirit said one. She loved the spirit.

5

*I still don't get it she said. What the devil  
have I done wrong?* I thought you'd be singing my praises  
but now you say you always thought total  
dedication to purely spiritual goals —

the path that you set me on — for me  
would be merely a transition. What  
is that supposed to mean? If there are any  
further goals behind these, goals for which one  
would have to give up the most magnificent  
and hard-won thing on earth, namely freedom,  
then I hope to stay in transition because  
*I won't give up my freedom for anything.*  
*No one can be happier than I am now.*  
What I need from you is not your advice.  
I need your trust. Not in the usual sense  
but trust that whatever I do or don't do  
it will be within the circle of what we share.

6

*The rarest and most glorious relationship created by eros*  
consists she said in the loved friend remaining the means through which  
our own deepest desires are fulfilled, the strongest contradictions of life  
resolved: both of you in the realm of what for each is divine,  
sharing the mutual loneliness to make that loneliness  
so profound that you see yourself open within the beloved other  
to everything procreatively human, protected by your friend from ever losing  
that sense of loneliness, protected even from one another,  
the ecstasy which transfigures you both turned not upon one another  
but towards an object of mutual desire that lifts you above  
being into a spiritual realm of your own shared vision.

7

*Objectivity no less than love is a willing opening to*  
*the darkness inside us* which insisting on our shared roots in the universe  
has never ceased denying isolation.

No matter what else was going on  
we could always she said touch our love and understanding of animals —  
beings not yet self-conscious as for better or worse we are.

*The more one is inclined towards eroticism* the longer one is able  
to withstand the demands involved without generating conflict between  
the satisfaction of desires and accommodation to reality:

such persons (those who fulfill not those who abstain) thus are she said  
capable of abstaining even longer because they know how close they are  
to their inner sanctum and having not split themselves into body and soul can gather

as human beings into a single vital strength able since

the most intimate and most transcendent are both divine to believe  
that joining into another is to in some way embrace the whole.

8

The most ideal love can become sensual again  
precisely because in its purest state the great emotions are released;  
it is she said an unpleasant fact this revenge of the body.

9

On her deathbed she listened to a young professor read  
of latest trends in philosophy — modern efforts to put  
our individual existences into the center of thought  
rather than imposing any rational systems —  
yet heard little new except names of men and names for forms  
eternally returned that she and those close to her  
had struggled with what seemed not so very long ago.

Once she looked up suddenly and said in a surprised voice  
*All my life I have done nothing but work . . . work. Why?*  
Towards the end her eyes closed and she murmured as if talking to herself  
*If I let my thoughts roam I find no one. The best after all is death.*