

## As with a Tempest So with Love

*the greatness of a person  
is their intensity  
- 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 do 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 humans it joins with mental effects  
associated with nervous excitement which leads to romantic  
idealizing of love then demands it be permanent,  
eternal faithfulness from those we love though we know  
quickly appeased animal needs clamor for change;  
habitual performances by deadening  
the stimuli increase 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 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

The most primitive form of union between living beings  
is the fusion of single-celled organisms  
the mind in its dream of perfection calls love.  
A boy and a girl in love desire she said  
such a total merging and are bewildered to find  
they have to make do with a single part.

But then desire itself brings about something like  
the total merging again as each separate organ,  
each cell of the body in the sexual moment  
remembers its descent from what was once  
a one-celled animal and all the cells  
are swept up in the excitement of the sexual cells.

Total surrender she called it, which in humans  
must (for anatomical reasons) be partial  
and because partial, often 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  
so completely. And then her almost startling frankness:  
she would discuss her most intimate private affairs with nonchalance.

I hesitate to use this word said one because  
I never compliment those whom I respect, but still,  
on the basis of her innermost essence, I call her a gem.

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.

She has dared to travel said one to the farthest horizon  
of thinkable, moral and intellectual worlds, a genius

of heroic character in spirit and disposition.

I know of no one else said one with life so much on their side.

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

No woman said one has radiated a stronger influence  
in German-speaking lands in the past 150 years.

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. In the name of the three devils  
what have I done wrong? I thought you would praise me for this  
but now you say you always thought total dedication  
to purely spiritual goals — the path you set me on —  
for me would merely be 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.  
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, trust in the sense  
that whatever I do or don't do it will be  
within the circle of what we two share.

6

The rarest and most glorious relationship  
created by eros consists she said in the partner remaining  
the means through which our own deepest desires are fulfilled,  
both of us in the realm of what for each is divine,  
sharing the mutual loneliness in order to make it  
so profound that you see yourself within the other,

open to everything procreatively human,  
the ecstasy which transfigures you both, turned toward  
an object of mutual desire that lifts you

into a spiritual realm of your own shared vision,  
protected by your friend from ever losing that sense  
of loneliness, protected even from one another.

Where love would be more than a sensual or sentimental  
pastime — a coalescence with the cosmos, a sensation  
of absorbing and being absorbed — each lover will tend  
to experience everything through the medium of the other and thus  
become the beloved spouse sibling parent friend  
playmate judge compassionate angel all at the same time.

7

A woman doesn't die of love  
but if she lacks love, she wilts.

Unrequited love dies of starvation,  
requited love dies of satiation.

No path leads from sensual passion  
to mental sympathy, but many the reverse.

For woman, the sensual moment is  
the last word in love, for men the first.

The difference between man and woman:  
anxious sperm and indolent ovum.

Not to have loved is not to have lived.  
To be one, two must remain two.

8

For woman she said love is the whole of existence. For her,  
sexual means something spiritual: her union is with God;  
the man, like Mary's carpenter, merely helps her reach her desire.  
Ethical and beautiful, like sacred and sexual,  
can mean the same thing, kindred terms wherein are expressed  
the prerogatives and limitations of the female.

Everything is included in this single truth: she must  
in every case begin anew the conflict of her inner life,  
the enigma of her being, and resolve it on her own initiative.  
That is why grace in the highest sense remains the criterion  
of her success and of her physical and maternal value.  
The insane fascination with submission, the strongest impulse in us all.

9

Eros attracts, eroticism seduces,  
sexuality is common, love almost  
mystical: distinctions which depend  
on whether one finds self-expression in  
our innocent physical natures, satisfaction  
in a pleasure as elemental as breathing; or whether  
with our whole being we honor the mystery  
of our relationship to all living things.

The lover and the creator are both characterized she said  
by their own naive ecstasies (the objective value  
of which is quite impossible to calculate), the need  
of consciousness to catch in a single view  
the mirrored confrontation between world and self:  
primordial spontaneous creation of the divine,  
an act of creative imagination: a magical  
sublimation, the mind's sacrament of redemption.

10

Throughout my life no desire has been more instinctive  
than that of showing reverence, as if all further  
relationships to persons or things could come only  
after that initial act. Anything that is  
bears within itself the whole weight of existence  
the totalizing union we feel within ourselves.

Since both the most intimate and most transcendent are divine,  
the more lovers are inclined towards eroticism — because  
they then know how close they are to the inner sanctum,  
and haven't split themselves into body and soul — the more  
they can gather into a single vital strength and believe  
that joining into another is in some way to embrace the whole.

11

Religion Sex Art — creativity  
a religious intimacy known to artists and lovers,  
what as a child she called God the Father and later,  
depending on the situation and how much Spinoza  
was on her mind at the time, Reality World  
Union Love a boundless community of fate,  
anything identical with everything.

Just as mysticism in its highest ecstasy  
can reach a coarsely religious sensuality

so too the most ideal love can become  
sensual again precisely because of its  
emotional intensification of the ideal.  
An unpleasant fact this revenge of the body she said,  
a false pathos where the feelings lose their truth and candor.

12

The rapture of love she said differs from lifelong union.  
There is a difference between looking for a friendly attachment  
and searching for a wedded fusion. In the latter case not only

is a distinctly higher profound fondness included  
but the desire and ability to relinquish one's own  
individual being. It isn't a question of committing

but of being committed — something in us already  
which unites and weds us something which lies beyond  
friendly interests, much deeper and higher

a matter of realizing whether we already belong  
in (not only to) one another in  
an almost religious or at least purely ideal sense.

Love itself she said is of course not purely ideal  
but I never understood why people whose love consists  
primarily in sensual attraction get married.

13

In love as in anything else ultimate success  
will remain the rare accomplishment of exceptional beings  
predestined by birth. The supreme and rarest achievement she said  
is not to discover the unknown or proclaim the incredible  
but to explore day-to-day existence, the richness  
of its full potential in the human spirit.

14

In her seventies, her one official marriage in mind  
— agreed to in her mid-twenties under what she called  
an irresistible compulsion, and only after  
the groom's consent (at her implacable insistence)  
to cohabitation forever unconsummated  
in the flesh yet extramarital relations ad lib —

she wrote that though we can be close in thought  
memory dreams imagination, in love

we must prove our oneness by consummating  
it bodily. But this proof she said  
cannot overcome the ultimate isolation  
of each one within oneself.

15

On her deathbed, acknowledging her lifelong urge  
to interpret all things for the best and happiest,  
her lifelong proclivity to equate the highest and most  
creative experiences with the deepest ones,

aware that as soon as she was gone or maybe before,  
the Gestapo would confiscate all her books and papers,  
she listened while a young professor read of latest trends  
in philosophy — Jaspers, Heidegger, current

efforts to put individual existences  
at the center of thought rather than a rational system,  
emphasizing that *angst* is the one and only means  
to attain insight into our authentic being —

she understood perfectly yet heard little new  
except names of men and terminology for forms  
eternally returned that she and those closest to her  
had articulated what seemed not so very long ago.

Once, near the end, she looked up suddenly and said  
in a surprised voice All my life I've worked . . . and for what?  
Eyes closed, she murmured as if to herself,  
If I let my thoughts roam I find no one. The best after all is death.