

On Poetry and Exile

Twelve Propositions

1. Who is not in exile. We make and remake poems and songs, so that we may go home again. To this making there is no end.
2. Home is by definition where mine is shared with you and yours is with me. Making a poem or song is a transmission that is a giving and a receiving, a two-way reciprocity, even when you or I write or sing alone, and whether into, within, outwith or with prevailing silence(s). Receiving or making a song or poem itself enables you and/or me to feel, think and believe, even if only for an eyeblink: Why, this (here, now) *is* home.
3. History is exile from eternity. Who doesn't live in history. Poetry (song) inserts us momentarily into a corner or station of eternity. Or maybe (even) into eternity's core? At any rate, not merely into a self-forgetting or dream, but a remembering that is a double waking.
4. Dare to do it. Dare to make a poem. When it sings inside you, aren't you at one with everything.
5. The poem says: The past hasn't yet even started, let alone happened, and the future came and went ages ago. The past is a seedling and the future, ashes.
6. On the ashes of the future the phoenix of this (here, now) cracks its eggshells and takes flight in flame. And what's that sound in the grate? Its newborn ancestor-descendent in the act of being born – singing.
7. My dead father came to me in a dream and said: 'I hear you're a poet. Are you a *good* poet?' In the dream itself I recognised this as a test and replied: 'That's not for me to say. What I can say is, I'm a true poet.' He smiled as if to say: 'Pass.'
8. In another dream, William Blake met me in an underground chamber far beneath the streets of London, and opened two vents in a wall. The larger one was an entry to hell, the smaller to paradise. He told me what I already half-knew, but I knew I had to hear from him, there and then, not from anybody else or at any other time, to make it real: *To gain entry to the latter, first pass through the former.*

9. Poems and songs can't avoid being replete with ancestral voices. To open oneself and self-clarify oneself sufficiently to listen to them.
10. Are the dreams of the young the remedies of the old? Are the dreams of the old the chains of the young? *Alas! We lodge in the body for a hundred years and end in the twinkling of an eye.*
11. In making poetry and song, do we wake or dream we wake? If the latter, are poems and songs the best parts of this double-dream of waking? Whatever the answer, do you think you've arrived? Whenever you think that, you haven't even started.
12. A host that matter-of-factly holds open house anywhere and anywhen, the poem offers you perpetual hospitality, whoever you are. .