

Time in the Rock

1. If one voice

Narrator:

If one voice, not another, must speak first,
out of the silence, the stillness, the preceding –
speaking clearly, speaking slowly, measuring calmly
the heavy syllables of doubt, or of despair –
speaking passionately, speaking bitterly, hunger or hope
ordering the words, that are like sounds of flame –:
if one speaks first, before that other or the third,
out of the silence bringing the dark message,
the grave and great acceptance of the rock,
the huge world, held in the huge hand of faith:

and if it says, I hold the world like this;
here in the light, amid these crumbling walls;
here in the half-light, the deceptive moment,
here in the darkness like a candle lifted –:
(take it, relieve me of it, bear it away;
have it, now and forever, for your own;
this that was mine, this that my voice made mine,
this that my word has shaped for you –

if this voice speaks before us, speaks before
ourselves can speak, challenging thus the dark;
waking the sleeping watcher from his sleep,
altering the dreamer's dream while still he dreams;
so that on waking – ah, what despair he knows!
to learn that while he slept the world was made –
made by that voice, and himself made no less,
and now inalterably curved forever –

and to look backward,
but know no turning back; to go forward,
even as we turn our faces to the past;
still gazing downward from the hill we climb,
searching the dark for that strange dream we had,
which the voice altered and broke –

can it comfort us,
us helpless, us thus shaped by a word,
can it comfort us that we ourselves
will bear the word with us, we too, we too
to speak, again, again, again, again, –
ourselves the voice for those not yet awakened, –
altering the dreams of those who dream, and shaping,
while still they sleep, their inescapable pain – ?

2. And there I saw the seed

voices and instruments

(12:00)

Text:

And there I saw the seed upon the mountain
but it was not a seed it was a star
but it was not a star it was a world
but it was not a world it was a god
but it was not a god it was a laughter

blood red within and lightning for its rind
the root came out like gold and it was anger
the root came out like fire and it was fury
the root came out like horn and it was purpose
but it was not a root it was a hand

destructive strong and eager full of blood
and broke the rocks and set them on each other
and broke the waters into shafts of light
and set them end to end and made them seas
and out of laughter wrung a grief of water

and thus beneath the web of mind I saw
under the west and east of web I saw
under the bloodshot spawn of stars I saw
under the water and the inarticulate laughter
the coiling down the coiling in the coiling

mean and intense and furious and secret
profound and evil and despatched in darkness
shot homeward foully in a filth of effort
clotted and quick and thick and without aim
spasm of concentration of the sea

and there I saw the seed upon the shore
but it was not a seed it was a man
but it was not a man it was a god
magnificent and humble in the morning
with angels poised upon his either hand.

3. O neighbors

Narrator:

O neighbors, in this world of dooms and omens,
participators in the crime of god,
seekers of self amid the ruins of space:
jurors and guilty men, who, face to face,
discover you but judge yourselves to death,
and for such guilt as god himself prepared, –
dreamed in the atom, and so brought to birth
between one zero and another, –

turn again

to the cold violet that braves the snow,
the murder in the tiger's eye, the pure
indifference in the star. Why, we are come
at last to that bright verge where god himself
dares for the first time, with unfaltering foot.
And can we falter, who ourselves are god?

4. But let us praise the voice

voices and instruments

(9:15)

Text:

But let us praise the voice the lonely voice
but let us praise the leaf that is the first
but let us praise the syllable the only
that syllable which is the seed of worlds

why we are walking and our lives are speech
you with a word and I with answering word
here we are walking in a world of omens
the leaves are in our hands and we exchange

what was it that you said what word was that
what sound was that my tongue gave back in answer
what touch was this of rock that brought a meaning
here in this field that is a gift of stars

here in this grass that is a gift of tongues
here in this light that is a gift of suns
here in this nearness that is a gift of space
here in this love that is a gift of face

love let us praise the voice and then deny it
let us adore denial and revile it
cross the field of stars and then forget it
love the face in space the space in face

let us adore together the vile atom
that fetched us here and gives us words to say it
simple simplicities in simple nothing
walking together in the field of death

love let us cross the field and then absolve it
despise our human moment and forgive it
revere our fear of godhead and remove it
rejoice in voice and then rejoice in sleep.

5. There is space

Narrator:

there is space,
still uncircumferenced by demons' wings,
or angels' either; and to sum the world,
but who will sum the world? what god will add
digit to digit, sandgrain to sandgrain,
amuse himself, on the last wall of knowledge,
laugh there, be boisterous, sum all things up
in one vast thunderclap of synthesis
speak his own sentence, and be dead?

there is time,
between this morning's instant and that wall,
for such infinitudes of delight and grief,
such patient additions and subtractions, such
new sentences, each wider than the last,
new knowledges, new visions and revisions,
that we ourselves are like that god; each moment
is the last wall from which our laughter rings;
the world summed up; and then a new world found.
vaster and richer; a new synthesis,
under the sandgrain, and above the star.
Come, let us read the book, look up each word,
say dark or bright, be frightened, pick our way
through the fierce multitude of thoughts and things –
from god to chaos, and chaos to god again –
in the unending glossary of the world.
Was that a bell that struck? a moment gone?
a voice that spoke, a bird that flew?
They were the shadows of a speech to come.

6. Escape the pattern
voices and instruments
(8:30)

Text:

Escape the pattern to another pattern:
avoid the ending for another ending:
a pattern begot of patterns and begetting patterns;
mad beyond madness, will tease you on
from false to false forever.

Ravel the pattern backward, to no pattern:
reduce the granite downward, to no stone:
unhinge the rainbow to his sun and rain:
dissolve the blood to water and to salt:
is this dishevelment we cannot bear?
The angel is the one who knows his wings!

7. Envy is holy

Narrator:

Envy is holy. Let us envy those
bright angels whose bright wings are stronger far
than the bare arms we lift toward the star.
And hate them too; until our hate has grown
to wings more powerful than angels' wings;
when with a vaulting step, from the bare mountain,
we'll breathe the empyrean; and so wheel
gladly to earth again.

Then we shall see
and love that humbleness which was ourselves;
it will be home to us; until such time
as our strong wings, in their own majesty,
themselves will lift us to another world;
from which is no return.

But in that world,
there too burn higher angels, whose wide wings
outspan us, shadow us hugely, and outsoar us;
rainbows of such magnificent height
as hide the stars; and under these we'll cower
envious and hateful; and we will envy,
till once again, with contumacious wings,
ourselves will mount to a new terror, wheel
slowly once more, but gratefully, and gladly,
to home in limbo.

8. And time comes in
voices and instruments
(7:00)

Text:

And time comes in that is a ball of crystal
time comes in that is a sheaf of wheat
time comes in that is a cloud of thunder
time comes in that is a drop of rain

the blood drop centres in the ball of crystal
the blood drop hurries down the sheaf of wheat
the blood drop opens to the voice of thunder
the blood drop drowns beneath the drop of rain

where is the blood drop gone and where the whisper
where is the mouth of blood that sang the song
where is the heart that broke within the crystal
time that came life that went

here in the blind almighty hand is god
rain thunder wheat and crystal mixed with blood
the broken heart the broken mouth that sings
the god who hates himself but dies for love

and time goes out that was a drop of blood
and time goes out that was a song of blood
and time goes out that was a death of rock
to peace at last love's kingdom come.