**The Windows**

Lord, how can man preach thy eternal word?

He is a brittle crazy glass;

Yet in thy temple thou dost him afford

This glorious and transcendent place,

To be a window, through thy grace.

But when thou dost anneal in glass thy story,

Making thy life to shine within

The holy preachers, then the light and glory

More reverend grows, and more doth win;

Which else shows waterish, bleak, and thin.

Doctrine and life, colours and light, in one

When they combine and mingle, bring

A strong regard and awe; but speech alone

Doth vanish like a flaring thing,

And in the ear, not conscience, ring.

—George Herbert

**High Windows**

When I see a couple of kids

And guess he’s fucking her and she’s

Taking pills or wearing a diaphragm,

I know this is paradise

Everyone old has dreamed of all their lives—

Bonds and gestures pushed to one side

Like an outdated combine harvester,

And everyone young going down the long slide

To happiness, endlessly. I wonder if

Anyone looked at me, forty years back,

And thought, *That’ll be the life;*

*No God any more, or sweating in the dark*

*About hell and that, or having to hide*

*What you think of the priest. He*

*And his lot will all go down the long slide*

*Like free bloody birds.* And immediately

Rather than words comes the thought of high windows:

The sun-comprehending glass,

And beyond it, the deep blue air, that shows

Nothing, and is nowhere, and is endless.

—Philip Larkin

**Windows**

Quarried from snow, the dark walks lead to doors

That are dark and closed. The white- and high-roofed houses

Float in the moonlight of the shining sky

As if they slept, the bedclothes pulled around them.

But in some the lights still burn. The lights of others’ houses.

Those who live there move seldom, and are silent.

Their movements are the movements of a woman darning,

A man nodding into the pages of a paper,

And are portions of a rite—have kept a meaning—

That I, that they know nothing of. What I have never heard

He will read me; what I have never seen

She will show me.

As dead actors on a rainy afternoon

Move in a darkened living room, for children

Watching the world that was before they were,

The windowed ones within their windowy world

Move past me without doubt, and for no reason.

*These* actors, surely, have known nothing of today,

That time of troubles and of me. Of troubles.

Morose and speechless, voluble with elation,

Changing, unsleeping, an unchanging speech,

These have not lived; look up, indifferent,

At me at my window, from the snowy walk

They move along in peace. . . . If only I were they!

Could act out, in longing, the impossibility

That haunts me like happiness!

Of so many windows, one is always open.

Some morning they will come downstairs and find me.

They will start to speak, and then smile speechlessly,

Shifting the plates, and set another place

At a table shining by a silent fire.

When I have eaten they will say, “You have not slept.”

And from the sofa, mounded in my quilt,

My cheek on *their* pillow, that is always cool,

I will look up speechlessly into a—

It blurs, and there is drawn across my face

As my eyes close, a hand’s slow fire-warmed flesh.

It moves so slowly that it does not move.

—Randall Jarrell

**The Instruction Manual**

As I sit looking out of a window of the building

I wish I did not have to write the instruction manual on the uses of a new metal.

I look down into the street and see people, each walking with an inner peace,

And envy them—they are so far away from me!

Not one of them has to worry about getting out this manual on schedule.

And, as my way is, I begin to dream, resting my elbows on the desk and leaning out of the window a little,

Of dim Guadalajara! City of rose-colored flowers!

City I wanted most to see, and most did not see, in Mexico!

But I fancy I see, under the press of having to write the instruction manual,

Your public square, city, with its elaborate little bandstand!

The band is playing *Scheherazade* by Rimsky-Korsakov.

Around stand the flower girls, handing out rose- and lemon-colored flowers,

Each attractive in her rose-and-blue striped dress (Oh! such shades of rose and blue),

And nearby is the little white booth where women in green serve you green and yellow fruit.

The couples are parading; everyone is in a holiday mood.

First, leading the parade, is a dapper fellow

Clothed in deep blue. On his head sits a white hat

And he wears a mustache, which has been trimmed for the occasion.

His dear one, his wife, is young and pretty; her shawl is rose, pink, and white.

Her slippers are patent leather, in the American fashion,

And she carries a fan, for she is modest, and does not want the crowd to see her face too often.

But everybody is so busy with his wife or loved one

I doubt they would notice the mustachioed man’s wife.

Here come the boys! They are skipping and throwing little things on the sidewalk

Which is made of gray tile. One of them, a little older, has a toothpick in his teeth.

He is silenter than the rest, and affects not to notice the pretty young girls in white.

But his friends notice them, and shout their jeers at the laughing girls.

Yet soon all this will cease, with the deepening of their years,

And love bring each to the parade grounds for another reason.

But I have lost sight of the young fellow with the toothpick.

Wait—there he is—on the other side of the bandstand,

Secluded from his friends, in earnest talk with a young girl

Of fourteen or fifteen. I try to hear what they are saying

But it seems they are just mumbling something—shy words of love, probably.

She is slightly taller than he, and looks quietly down into his sincere eyes.

She is wearing white. The breeze ruffles her long fine black hair against her olive cheek.

Obviously she is in love. The boy, the young boy with the toothpick, he is in love too;

His eyes show it. Turning from this couple,

I see there is an intermission in the concert.

The paraders are resting and sipping drinks through straws

(The drinks are dispensed from a large glass crock by a lady in dark blue),

And the musicians mingle among them, in their creamy white uniforms, and talk

About the weather, perhaps, or how their kids are doing at school.

Let us take this opportunity to tiptoe into one of the side streets.

Here you may see one of those white houses with green trim

That are so popular here. Look—I told you!

It is cool and dim inside, but the patio is sunny.

An old woman in gray sits there, fanning herself with a palm leaf fan.

She welcomes us to her patio, and offers us a cooling drink.

“My son is in Mexico City,” she says. “He would welcome you too

If he were here. But his job is with a bank there.

Look, here is a photograph of him.”

And a dark-skinned lad with pearly teeth grins out at us from the worn leather frame.

We thank her for her hospitality, for it is getting late

And we must catch a view of the city, before we leave, from a good high place.

That church tower will do—the faded pink one, there against the fierce blue of the sky. Slowly we enter.

The caretaker, an old man dressed in brown and gray, asks us how long we have been in the city, and how we like it here.

His daughter is scrubbing the steps—she nods to us as we pass into the tower.

Soon we have reached the top, and the whole network of the city extends before us.

There is the rich quarter, with its houses of pink and white, and its crumbling, leafy terraces.

There is the poorer quarter, its homes a deep blue.

There is the market, where men are selling hats and swatting flies

And there is the public library, painted several shades of pale green and beige.

Look! There is the square we just came from, with the promenaders.

There are fewer of them, now that the heat of the day has increased,

But the young boy and girl still lurk in the shadows of the bandstand.

And there is the home of the little old lady—

She is still sitting in the patio, fanning herself.

How limited, but how complete withal, has been our experience of Guadalajara!

We have seen young love, married love, and the love of an aged mother for her son.

We have heard the music, tasted the drinks, and looked at colored houses.

What more is there to do, except stay? And that we cannot do.

And as a last breeze freshens the top of the weathered old tower, I turn my gaze

Back to the instruction manual which has made me dream of Guadalajara.

—John Ashbery

**Goodbye**

She stood at the window. There was  
a sound, a light.  
She stood at the window. A face.  
  
Was it that she was looking for,  
he thought. Was it that  
she was looking for. He said,  
  
turn from it, turn  
from it. The pain is  
not unpainful. Turn from it.  
  
The act of her anger, of  
the anger she felt then,  
not turning to him.

—Robert Creeley