

Still Life

There is a kind of beauty in a face that's died.
The tranquil brow, the silence of the parted lips
speak of a calm, a peace beyond a restless tide.

I thought of this last night when restless in the bed
I looked beyond my fretful hopes and fears and saw
your shadow-shrouded body and your dim-lit head.

Your face, your lids were pale and ghostly in the gloom,
your hands a stillness sculptured on a stiff cold breast
as if you were a cold stone woman sleeping on a tomb.

'Good God!' I thought, 'what if this sleep's a deadly jest?
What will the children do, your death a lifelong wound!
Ah no, no, no! I never dreamed you'd leave so soon!'

Up on one elbow then, I bent and touched your arm.
A gust of wind which shook a tree across the moon
dishevelled light and shadows on your marbled calm.

I searched your death-in-life for life. At last I saw
a flutter in your skin and kissed and kissed your throat
as if I'd never kissed your breathing warmth before.

You stirred and still asleep half-murmured at the touch.
'Each night from now,' I whispered then, 'may your still life
show me a little of your death but not, please GΩd, too much.'