

why we are poets

Why we are poets.
What we are trying to DO as poets.
What inspires us.
How and thanks to whom we survive.
Whether we believe in anything outside ourselves.
And (bottom line) how this promotes our brotherhood-in-arms.

I cannot speak for anyone except myself.
I cannot speak for anyone.
I cannot speak.

I can only sing: the trees of Lappersfort
seen and remembered in December glory
sun and blue sky behind their branches
raised in defiance of the human threat
hard for us here in this warm room to imagine.

Yes, friend, for you were there among the band,
your big dog scuffling mongst the fallen twigs
and leaves at Mark and Melanie's memorial
while Paul and Marcus, one in crackling Dutch,
his more romantic mate in Milton's tongue
warmed hearts and frightened skulking shadows
for one blessed morning from the peaceful woods.

Lappersfort! You will go down in history
long after we have crumbled into soil
and our contestants fester in forgotten news.
Your noble beech trees, your proud poplars
make our polemics seem ridiculous.
Deep in the ground of truth and righteousness
your roots defy the feeble axe of time.

A neighbour came. Sweet Wisdom was her name.
And there were fearless children too. Your wife and you.
Anaesthetists and nurses, plucked from the A.Z.
Who clapped their gloves at everything we read.

Sorrow and foreboding tore at my heart
Leaving that lovely place. My fellow poet seemed
More anxious for his injured son than for the trees
Sworn to destruction by money-grubbing men.
Was I the only one to get the message?
Would my heart one day be torn out by the roots?
Are these lines limbs which will soon be sawn apart?
Will my leaves be destined for the bonfire of oblivion?

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