

*Still Nature (by Joseph Brodsky)*

1

*Objects and people occupy  
our realm. The ones  
and the others torment the eye.  
Darkness restores balance.*

*Seated upon a bench  
in the park, I watch from behind  
a family strolling, clenched.  
I am appalled by daylight.*

*It's January. Winter's host,  
by a calendar's trick.  
When darkness appalls me most,  
then I shall speak.*

2

*It's time. I am ready to start.  
No matter from where. Unbolt  
my mouth. I may keep it shut.  
But speaking would spare my faults.*

*Of what? Of days. Of nights.  
Or else about naught.  
Or else of objects, alright.  
Objects, rather than of*

*people. They shall die.  
We shall all assume the death grin.  
Such is an effort futile.  
Like carving a script on the wind.*

3

*The blood in my veins is cold.  
Its chill is awfully worse  
than a glacier from pole to pole.  
Folks make my muse hoarse.*

*Can't stand the way they appear.  
By way of their faces, life  
A countenance perseveres  
Which fails to be scraped with knives.*

*A touch in their faces lures,  
which brings to the mind disdain.  
Which blunt flattery procures.  
To whom? It is far from plain.*

4

*Objects are nicer. Wherein  
there is no evil nor good  
on shell. And if you dig in  
inwards, it's equally crude.*

*Inside the object there's dust.  
Ashes. Wood chomping bugs.  
Hedges. Dry moth to last.  
So awkward for palms to track.*

*Dust. And a beam of light  
nothing but dust reveals.  
Even if by hindsight  
the object was utterly sealed.*

5

*The guise of the old cupboard,*

*as its inward scenery,  
beget me to recall  
of Notre Dame De Paris.*

*It's dark in the cupboard's depth.  
Neither a broom, nor a stole  
can wipe the dust. Objects themselves  
do not, as a rule, behold*

*to overcome their ash,  
their eyebrow they furrow not.  
Wherefore dust is the flesh  
of time; its flesh and blood.*

6

*Lately I often lapse  
to sleep in the midst of day.  
Seemingly my own death  
offers a bid on my fate,*

*putting, although I breath,  
a mirror against my mouth,  
how is my sticking-with  
nonbeing from north to south.*

*I fail to move. My both  
thighs are as cold as ice.  
My vein's Indigo  
with marble coincides.*

7

*Yielding a full surprise  
via its angles' sum,  
an object evades precise-*

*ly the genome of lingual hums.*

*Objects don't stand. And don't  
move along. That's nonsense.  
Objects are space, beyond  
which they maintain absence.*

*One can smash objects, burn them,  
Disembowel, break.  
Toss. Objects, however,  
will not shout: "screw you, ape".*

8

*A tree. Falling shade. The land  
beneath the tree for the roots.  
Monograms roughly bent.  
Clay. Some rocks line a group.*

*Roots. Their intertwists.  
A boulder, whose own load  
Offers a mild release  
out of one's scheme of bonds.*

*It is inert. And i-  
mmovable, defying reset.  
A shade. A man within,  
same as a fish in the net.*

9

*An object. It's brown tint.  
Whose contour befalls no more.  
Twilight. There's nothing  
else. Nature mort.*

*Death will come and obtain  
the body, whose smooth effect  
death's call, like the traits  
of a woman's call, will reflect.*

*It is absurd. Sheer lies:  
A skull, skeleton or scythe.  
"Death will come, its devise  
will mirror the look in your eyes".*

10

*Thus Mary spoke to Christ:  
Are you my son or my  
God? You are crucified.  
Set homewards how can I?*

*How can I step the thresh-  
old, yet to grasp and decide:  
are you my God or my flesh?  
Namely, dead or alive?*

*Thus spoke Christ in return:  
Whether I'm dead or alive,  
there is no difference, wo-  
man. Son or God, I'm thine.*

1971

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