

xiii. Il Ultimo Biennale.

'Do the villains make the hero bleed?'

The children want to know,
as they listen to some tale from long ago
for, where blood is to be found,
imagination takes firm hold
with full attention guaranteed
as, with smirking lips and squinting eyes,
they seek out where the body lies.

Most heroes from the ancient past
wait upon the shelf,
till we decide to take
one down and have a read,
hoping for the mystery to cast
its bloody spell...

but with you there is no need.
Not many heroes get to tell
their listeners how to make
their flesh and blood appear:

*This is my very self
before your eyes – right here!*

When you held up the bread and wine,
you began a most intriguing story line
and I have set myself the task
of adapting your gesture to our age -
though, being of little more than average
creativity, I scarcely dare to ask
for your approval and advice.

Might I be a living sacrifice
endlessly retold?
Might my flesh be torn by faithful hands?
Who might reverently draw near
to take this blood upon their lips and tongue?

Where might this body find a strong
and unseen father who commands
a trembling second birth?
And when I plead with him, what might I fear?
How might I hang between heaven and earth?

(-----.)

And in the tomb, what longing will survive?

What if, on the appointed day,
I go unnoticed by my grieving friends?
What if my memory descends
into oblivion, my name unrecognised?
Will I be rescued from the glacial frown
of death? Will my unseen father turn away?

You will note with due relief
that clear instructions have been written down.
La Fondazione della Biennale has been authorised,
to accept my body in the cause of art.

I will make my admiring public part
their lips in bewildered disbelief
at the blink of what was once an eye
and from the aged city's languid air
I will make my last and parting prayer:

Do you know how to live and bleed and die?