

WILLOWS

Willows are trees of life. They ride
Their limp boughs to their feeding ground
And sound
Their roots in their immediate countryside.

Like them, I, too, survive
By circular and seasonal disguise;
One golden childhood willow kept my eyes
In a hugh green honey hive;

Those twigs and saplings of indifferent dreams
Blooming upon their mountain meadowlands
Sprang in my hands
Like shadows on the upper willow streams.

Now down they run like water to broad plumes
Of delta beds
And toss their palaces of tangled heads
In green felicities of trailing rooms

While rivers in the silted sands dispute,
With sea-borne gravity,
The overflowing tree,
The plunging siphon root.

That thirst would drink the creek beds dry:
Or so I thought. But minnow schools
Sparkle in willow pools,
Shifting their golden flecks in that bright eye.

So have I lain in depths while vision pearled
Over the clouded surfaces of things
In dense imaginings
With one eye squinting upward into the world

Out of my willowy sleep. That memory calls
Where the old willow tells
Of disembodied cities of floating bells
Tumbling simultaneously through waterfalls.

The spring floods flash. Believe me, one can not
Casually remember now
All jewels hidden under the willow bough,
In all-begetting time what one begot.

When I am an old man and dying, almost lost
On the northern slopes of death, a stiff reed
Trembling from husk to seed,
My flutes all cracked with frost,

I will translate myself into a brown
Paradise of willow roots, a whole
Country of mountain meadows for the soul
Dreaming toward natural grace in a green town.

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