Aaron Copland, Poems of Emily Dickinson

1. Nature, the gentlest mother

Nature, the gentlest mother
Impatient of no child,
The feeblest or the waywardest -
Her admonition mild

In forest and the hill
By traveler is heard,
Restraining rampant squirrel
Or too impetuous bird.

How fair her conversation,
A summer afternoon -
Her household, her assembly;
And when the sun goes down

Her voice among the aisles
Incites the timid prayer
Of the minutest cricket,
The most unworthy flower.

When all the children sleep
She turns as long away
As will suffice to light her lamps;
Then, bending from the skym

With infinite affection
And infiniter care,
Her golden finger on her lip,
Wills silence everywhere.

2. There came a Wind like a Bugle

There came a Wind like a Bugle -
It quivered through the Grass
And a Green Chill upon the Heat
So ominous did pass
We barred the Window and the Doors
As from an Emerald Ghost -
The Doom's electric Moccasin
That very instant passed -
On a strange Mob of planting Trees
And Fences fled away
And Rivers where the Houses ran
The Living looked that Day -
The Bell within the steeple wild
The flying tiding whirled -
How much can come
And much can go,
And yet abide the World!

3. Why do they shut me out of Heaven?

Why do they shut me out of Heaven?
Did I sing too loud?
But I can sing a little “minor,”
Timid as a bird.

Wouldn’t the angels try me just once more
Just see if I troubled them
But don’t shut the door, don’t shut the door!

Oh, if I were the gentlemen in the white robes
And they were the little hand that knocked,
Could I forbid, could I forbid, could I forbid?
Why do they shut me out of Heaven?
Did I sing too loud?

4. The world feels dusty

The world feels dusty,
When we stop to die
We want the dew then
Honors taste dry

Flags vex a dying face
But the least fan
Stirred by a friend’s hand
Cools like the rain

Mine be the ministry
when thy thirst comes
Dews of thyself to fetch
and holy balms.

5. Heart, we will forget him

Heart, we will forget him
You and I, tonight.
You may forget the warmth he gave,
I will forget the light.
When you have done, pray tell me,
That I my thoughts may dim;
Haste! lest while you’re lagging,
I may remember him!
6. Dear March, come in!

Dear March, come in!
How glad I am!
I looked for you before.
Put down your hat –
You must have walked –
How out of breath you are!

Dear March, how are you?
And the rest?
Did you leave Nature well?
Oh, March, come right upstairs with me,
I have so much to tell!

I got your letter, and the bird’s;
The maples never knew
That you were coming – I declare,
How red their faces grew!
But, March, forgive me -
And all those hills
You left for me to hue,
There was no purple suitable,
You took it all with you.

Who knocks? that April?
Lock the door!
I will not be pursued!
He stayed away a year, to call
When I am occupied.
But trifles look so trivial
As soon as you have come,
And blame is just as dear as praise
And praise as mere as blame.

7. Sleep is supposed to be

Sleep is supposed to be,
By souls of sanity,
The shutting of the eye.
Sleep is the station grand
Down which on either hand
The hosts of witness stand!

Morn is supposed to be,
By people of degree,
The breaking of the day.
Morning has not occurred!
That shall aurora be
East of Eternity;
One with the banner gay,
One in the red array -
That is the break of day.

8. When they come back

When they come back – if Blossoms do -
I always feel a doubt
If Blossoms can be born again
When once the Art is out -

When they begin, if Robins do,
I always had a fear
I did not tell, it was their last Experiment
Last Year -

When it is May, if May return,
Has nobody a pang
That on a Face so beautiful
We might not look again?

If I am there – One does not know
What Party – One may be
Tomorrow, but if I am there
I take back all I say –

9. I felt a Funeral in my Brain

I felt a Funeral in my Brain,
And Mourners to and fro,
Kept treading – treading – till it seemed
That Sense was breaking through -

And when they all were seated,
A Service, like a Drum -
Kept beating – beating – till I thought
My Mind was going numb -

And then I heard them lift a Box
And creak across my Soul
With those same Boots of Lead, again,
Then Space – began to toll,

As all the Heavens were a Bell,
And Being, but an Ear,
And I, and Silence some strange Race
Wrecked, solitary, here -

And then a Plank in Reason, broke,
And I dropped down, and down -
And hit a World, at every plunge,
And Finished knowing – then -

10. I’ve heard an organ talk sometimes

I’ve heard an organ talk sometimes
In a cathedral aisle
And understood no word it said
Yet held my breath the while
And risen up and gone away,
A more Bernardine girl
And know not what was done to me
In that old hallowed aisle.

11. Going to Heaven!

Going to Heaven!
I don’t know when,
Pray do not ask me how -
Indeed I’m too astonished
To think of answering you!
Going to Heaven! -
How dim it sounds!
And yet it will be done
As sure as flocks go home at night
Unto the shepherd’s arm!

Perhaps you’re going too!
Who knows?
If you should get there first
Save just a little place for me
Close to the two I lost!
The smallest “robe” will fit me,
And just a bit of “crown”;
For you know we do not mind our dress
When we are going home.

Going to Heaven!

I’m glad I don’t believe it
For it would stop my breath,
And I’d like to look a little more
At such a curious earth!
I am glad they did believe it
Whom I have never found
Since the mighty autumn afternoon
I left them in the ground.
12. The Chariot

Because I would not stop for Death,
He kindly stopped for me;
The carriage held but just ourselves
And Immortality.

We slowly drove, he knew no haste,
And I had put away
My labour, and my leisure too
For his civility.

We passed the school where children played,
Their lessons scarcely done,
We passed the fields of gazing grain,
We passed the setting sun.
[Or rather, he passed us,
The dews drew quivering and chill,
For only gossamer, my gown,
My tippet, only tulle.]

We paused before a house that seemed
A swelling of the ground;
The roof was scarcely visible,
The cornice but a mound.

Since then 'tis centuries; but each
Feels shorter than the day
I first surmised the horses' heads
Were towards eternity.

Brahms Two Songs, Opus 91
Gestillte Sehnsucht: Longing Eased

Steeped in a golden evening glow,
how solemnly the forests stand!
In gentle voices the little birds breathe
into the soft fluttering of evening breezes.
What does the wind whisper, and the little birds?
They whisper the world into slumber.
You, my desires, that stir
in my heart without rest or peace!
You longings that move my heart,
When will you rest, when will you sleep?
By the whispering of the wind, and of the little birds?
You yearning desires, when will you fall asleep?
What will come of these dreamy flights?
What stirs me so anxiously, so sweetly?
It comes pulling me from far-off hills,
It comes from the trembling gold of the sun.
The wind whispers loudly, as do the little birds;
The longing, the longing - it will not fall asleep.
Alas, when no longer into the golden distance
does my spirit hurry on dream-wings,
when no more on the eternally distant stars
does my longing gaze rest;
Then the wind and the little birds
will whisper away my longing, along with my life.

_Geistliches Wiegenlied “Sacred Lullaby”_

You who hover around these palm-trees in night and wind,
you holy angels,
hush the tree-tops!
My child is asleep [my child is asleep].

You palm-trees of Bethlehem in the raging wind –
how can you thresh so angrily tonight?
Oh roar not so! Be silent, lean down calmly and gently;
hush the tree-tops [hush the tree-tops]!
My child is asleep [my child is asleep].

The heavenly babe suffers distress;
oh how weary he has grown with all the sorrows of the world
[oh how weary, how weary he has grown with all the sorrows of the world].
Oh now that in sleep his pains are gently eased,
hush the tree-tops [hush the tree-tops]!
My child is asleep [my child is asleep].

A fierce coldness comes roaring down;
with what shall I cover my baby’s limbs?
Oh all you angels that wander winged in the wind,
hush the tree-tops [hush the tree-tops]!
My child is asleep [my child is asleep].