

The True Survivors

(to the memory of Hannah Arendt)

We must love one another or die.

Thus Auden (thirty years before his death).

Poet of the Thirties; Forties; Fifties; Sixties.

Poet.

Immortalised by Death, the great decider

Of acclamation. Fame. Posterity's final verdict.

Berryman (from a Bridge) Plath (Oven) Sexton (Car-exhaust).

Pursued in desperate plunges from the heights

Distorted, thwarted destinies. Grim delights

Of Death's Grim Jests-Booke denigrate survival

As prosaic special-pleading. So, Poets rival

Each other's ways-and-means of last leave-taking.

Instead of Poetry's function: Making. Making.

The True Survivors: Those who laugh, accept

The busy, comic foretaste of the tragic.

Thus, Hannah Arendt, dying at sixty-nine

While dining/wining friends at her Apartment,

Departed in celebration, life-in-death.

Her work still incomplete: *Thinking. Willing. Judging.*

Life of the Mind. Not sterile Death-Wish, grudging

The otherness of others. Seeing Auden's pants

Baggy and tobacco-stained, she danced

Attendance on him lightly like a fire-fly.

Brought him to buy a new pair. Poets die

From stains accumulating as they strain

Towards durability. She knew poets' real pain:

Ageing to impotence in baggy breeches.

Raging against the fire of burnt-out wishes.