

**Five Poems of Peter Nicholson**

*Selected by Tarun Tapas Mukherjee, Editor*

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**A Life**

No intermediary in the passing night  
Brought better news than what the heart revealed,  
Sending from its furthest reaches news  
Of bitter blood, infatuated calm  
Or a tempest of delighted skin.  
Thus at midnight, with the world beyond  
Your fragmentary reach at goodnesses,  
Silence then was best—you were just a guest  
Of something larger than this sorrowing.  
No use to reason why the crest of time  
Has danced on you, then left a trampled rind.  
You lived and knew the best, then left your life behind.

**En Route**

Grey slough of skins on trains at dusk  
Foretell the future we know,  
Graven from the office sex,  
Not getting on or getting on  
At lunches where the city blurs  
In alcoholic mutterings.

Through the streaming suburbs winds  
Ranks of limbs in flickered fire,  
Advertising hoardings bearing  
All our second-rateness,  
False imagery of lives not lived.

We are golden, and the trees  
Shaking by the tracks are trailing  
Absolute transcendences  
We've distrusted,  
Lacking wisdom, strength.

Birds swing round and dogs prick ears.  
The ticket is collected, dark  
Spreading into passageways  
That curve, then lift, or dip to drives

Where roses hang, and stars  
Spread out like a tapestry.  
Reaching to our creaking doors  
We know a greater destiny  
That, somehow, still, we must believe.

### **Panorama**

You serried ranks of critic clouds  
Shadowing festivities,  
Do you judge us  
With the eyes of lovers,  
Or is it with disdain  
You cancel sunset's calm.

I reach at your immortal shapes,  
Over the wings of destinies,  
You boasting with your white on blue,  
A phalanx Plato might have seen,  
Revealing here so strangely  
Enigmas we have dreamed.

We will be dead so long  
Beneath your vapours trailing  
And this need to know  
Reduce to a blank  
Or a shining:—  
Roll on across our days and years  
Forever as our limit nears.  
Judge us kindly as we wake  
To know a new birth and new age.

### **The Artist's Agony Aunt Replies**

Brobdingnag into Lilliput doesn't go—  
Work that out early if you want to keep  
Your gold estate  
From predations by those CEOs and phonies  
Who've risen to the level of baloney.

Art is more important than their blather,  
But only you and the happy few will know  
Why you'll be intransigent and stroppy  
When they're expecting parrot words to serve  
For beauties and their furies here conferred.

Art cannot wait for being understood  
When blood has, by the Muse, been dispossessed.  
They'll want you to sell short your better part  
For slaps on the back and lower ranks of things  
Where they have dumped their burden without wings.

For all the money, politics and kudos  
Others have for meaning in their lives,  
When summing up a goodness that survives,  
The gift of art, however hard or strange,  
Is worthy of a life none with you may change.

### **Silhouette**

Limits to living, selvedge of the soul  
Whose length we furl  
With algebra  
Or reasoned explanations,  
Rinsing borders  
With redder patination  
And howling divinations  
For things gone wrong, a sudden kill.

What to do with the stitching  
Where air meets skin, and the itching  
Of years is a scab  
Which we pick in the night,  
Black roses at our throat,  
Or a stabbing hand stopped  
Near a back  
Whose goodness we lack.

Sunset or ruins of autumn  
Speak of an end that is certain,  
And the summing up  
Of this overflowing cup  
Leaves a grazed tongue and thighs skinned—  
Shadows lengthen the blaze  
Near this mortal face,  
The silhouette here of our caring.