

Poetry Series

**Philippa Lane**  
**- poems -**

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## Philippa Lane(March 7th,1941)

A war baby, Philippa Lane was born in Chichester, West Sussex, England on March 7,1941. Her only vivid memory of early childhood in South-East England is the sound of Nazi missiles (doodlebugs) cruising overhead en route for the threatened destruction of London. If one were shot down, as occasionally might happen, it could explode horribly close and destroy a part of her beloved countryside instead.

At the age of seven, Philippa was sentenced to a boarding school education. She went to Stone Court in Hastings, as cold as its name implies. She remembers her mother telling her that at her new school, the people who ran it were nuns, adding: "They're different from you and me." "What are they?" asked Philippa. "It doesn't matter, dear, but they dress differently." Her first impression was that they were rather large penguins. Philippa vaguely recalls that there were some classrooms with desks and blackboards, but she was so preoccupied with the dilemma of whether the nuns were male, female, or, perhaps, both, her only real recollection are textures, smells, noises, imaginings and fantasies. Also, she remembers being so close with nature exploring every inch of the wonderful grounds, woods and gardens.

She started writing poetry around ten years of age, and her early poetry is closely linked with her relationship with nature. At the age of eleven, junior students were sent to complete their formal education at the senior school, St. Mary's, run by blue-stockinged nuns. Clearer memories are of the spaciousness of the grounds, lacrosse, the beauty of the gardens, the charm of the ancient buildings and the horrors of the meagre amenities inside them. It was a Spartan existence. Wooden corridors wound on forever, lit by gas lamps to dormitories with biblical and Greek names: Hebron, Siloam, Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta, Omega and Epsilon. Philippa's first dormitory was Kappa "Kappa had three bathrooms – in the middle of the floor were duckboards to stand on... we were allowed four inches of water to wash in, and a quarter of an hour to have a bath. "We had a pretty porcelain washbowl in our dormitory – beside which was placed a hammer, so we could break the ice before we washed our faces. We woke in winter to the sight of icicles hanging above our heads and beds – our breath puffs of white smoke in the freezing air."

She excelled in all sports, particularly lacrosse. Automatically expected to gain entrance to Oxford to read Classics, she rebelled against this expectation and, in 1957, after challenging the newly-appointed headmistress on a point of principle, was de-prefected in front of the entire staff and students at an Assembly

arranged especially for this purpose. "It was my first experience of sheer humiliation and victimization." Thus, she was paroled at seventeen to complete her "A" levels privately under less austere custody. She recalls: "We were a motley bunch – I had spots, greasy hair, huge feet and chilblains – but we were good-natured, chaste and uncomplicated, with high ideals and a firm sense of duty."

Her penchant for the Arts became evident in 1958, when Philippa, armed with diplomas in English Literature, Public Speaking, Book Prizes and Certificates for art from The Royal Academy of Art for Picture Making, and the much-coveted gold medal of the Royal Poetry Society, won a scholarship to the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London. This she was forbidden by her father to accept, inasmuch as it was common knowledge that practice in the Performing Arts might lead to Professionalism in the Performing Arts that was unwholesome; moreover, quite an improper thing for a young gentlewoman to do as an occupation. She recalls her father saying: "Only loose women go to RADA" – and that was that. A few months later, her father died of cancer. "I was absolutely devastated, lost and had no direction – bearing the scars of injustice and humiliation, I simply gave up." She attended technical college and obtained diplomas in shorthand and typewriting, left for London and found employment as secretary to the television director of an advertising agency. At twenty-one, she spent a year in Denmark through her membership of the Danish Club in London – first staying on a farm in South Jutland and later moving to Copenhagen. "I longed to see The Little Mermaid. Like so many others, I anticipated a largish sculpture; but there was the place, and I still didn't see her – then I realized she was there, blending into the low rocky foreshore with waves lapping gently over her exquisite smoothness and form, an integral part of the seascape." Later, Philippa returned to her homeland in the Weald of Kent and was employed as a private secretary for a well-known aeronautical journalist and author on his farm in the Canterbury Way.

She recalls: "It was a blissful time – I drove thirty miles to work through pretty, winding lanes in the early morning mist and typed manuscripts in the old cow barns converted into offices – the scent of bluebells, the sound of skylarks singing, and smells of manure drifting in through the windows. I lunched at the local pub and chatted with the farmers, and learned, through my boss, how to fly a Tiger Moth. At precisely four o'clock, we were served tea and Fuller's cake. I derived enormous satisfaction from my task of converting the large hay barn into a technical library. On my way home I played a round of golf." Ms. Lane emigrated to Canada in 1963. "It was partly impulsive, and partly driven by my loathing of the Class system in England – it didn't sit well with my moral code".

In 1989, she assisted her husband on a working trip to Tunisia. "I shall never forget the Bardo – a palace and a museum. It was breathtaking, actually walking on the vast antique mosaics and picking up the odd broken piece, caressing the smooth marble of Roman statues, and running my fingers over the sensuous lips of Marcus Aurelius. The vestiges of Carthage and the beauty of the 'three Blues' of Sidi Bou Said – the blue of the painted Ottoman shutters and doors, the blue of the sky, and the blue of the Mediterranean. I returned with a book of exquisite paintings of their revered Mahmoud Sedhili, and many photographs taken both in Tunis and in the South – of Arabs and their families, the olive groves, the mules and cacti blossoming the scrubby landscape. On the plane back to Montreal, I felt I was returning to a third-world country not leaving one – still smelling the scent of mimosa and the sincere warmth and intelligence of the people we met there."

Philippa has experimented in the Plastic Arts and has marketed silk-print designs. Her written work includes poetry, most notable of which are her Colour poems, published in Soliloquies, and articles of naturalistic and historic interest, some of which have been published. She has also written a short story, 'Martha's Supplication', and much more. Her life-long love of poetry – 'the silent picture' – often takes over from her love of painting and designing; more often, there is a blending of the two, in the long periods of thought preceding the actual execution of a poem or a painting. "I cannot separate them – they are a good marriage: when I read a poem, I see hues of colours, space, shapes, rhythm and harmony; when I see a painting, I see rhythm, melody, words, and metaphors in the composition. A poem is addressed to a listener by a speaker: a painting is speaking to a silent observer'. Self-taught, the diversity of her art is matched by her strong will not to belong to any school and to follow no rules at all. What she lacks in accepted technique, both in her poetry and paintings, is made up for by her rich inspiration and abundant imagination. She expresses, with all her strength, through her art, the importance of man's relationship with nature, and a global vision of social and humanitarian issues interwoven with the vast range of feelings peculiar to man.

Philippa is married, has a daughter, two sons and four grandchildren, and lives near Montréal, Québec, Canada.

# Ashima's Calling

Through the mysterious dark  
and violent waves,  
her shimmering turquoise tail  
reflecting beaming colours  
against the sunset on a cloudy night -

Her long, wavy, flaxen hair.  
against the curves and edges  
of the hollow grey sea,  
with creatures as indescribable  
as her, the hypnotizing, melodious siren -

Beautiful Ashima...

(by my granddaughter, Freya,12, who I hope will join )

Philippa Lane

# Autumn Leaves

we rake them into pyramid pyres,  
our satisfaction glowing like the flame  
with which we light them.

we watch them smolder and consume,  
and flirt with summer's memory,  
whose ghost arises from the charred remains.

but on the leaf-cleared ground next day,  
we stand unsure of our suburban ritual,  
our sense of order questioned

by the pungent smell of conscience  
lingering in the air  
long after the cremation

we now illogically regret and mourn.

Philippa Lane

# Birling Gap

At high tide,  
as we drove along the seafront  
on our family outing,  
our car would be peppered with pebbles  
and salt water  
that the procellous sea  
and raging gales threw up.

The giant waves would wash right over us,  
and the wind-screen wipers  
were seldom sufficient to see  
in front of us, so we usually stopped  
or the car stalled not liking the wet.

At low tide, my brother and I  
skipped from one barnacled rock  
to another, like hop-scotch;  
we hung prawn nets down in the gullies  
and checked for different seaweeds.

One wonderful day we found a conger eel  
trapped in a gully; we had a painful run  
to the lighthouse to get a gaff hook,  
our bare feet killing us,  
so hard were the pebbles.

We speared the eel and later took it home,  
where we sliced it into edible pieces,  
wrapped them in newspaper  
and proudly gave one to each  
of our neighbours.

We measured the eel -  
it was six feet two inches long  
the same height as my father.  
It had vicious, needlesharp teeth  
that could easily have bitten off

one of our thumbs as we tried to net it.

We took a photograph  
with my Kodak Brownie  
of me holding it up  
in my blue checkered gingham dress  
with a big, proud grin on my face.

My brother and father looked sombre,  
and my brother's school cap  
was crooked on his head  
and my father looked at the camera  
grimly as if it was the enemy.

We all stood on the burning tarmac  
on the flat part of the roof  
on the second storey  
of the bank flat where we lived,  
and my mother took the shots.

My mother made parsley sauce  
to go with our share of the conger eel  
and we revelled in each bite.

Other days, we would go to Birling Gap  
and take our deckchairs and lots of blankets  
that we would wrap ourselves up in  
hugging them  
to our oh so cold bodies;

and we sat there in the bleak landscape  
on the desolate pebbled beach  
digging into our brown paper lunch bags.  
a grimmer place there couldn't be  
for a picnic, but that is what we did.

Strange as it seemed,  
such outings  
were magical to my brother and me.

At high tide, the water was ten feet deep  
at the sea wall and I liked to dive



into the freezing water  
in my woolen bathing suit  
my mother made for me;

,  
I would brace myself  
and dive in,  
swim a few breast strokes,  
then gasp for breath,  
and haul myself up the wall

shivering and shaking  
feeling the bitter  
north-easterly wind  
and wrap my towel around me  
to lessen the agony

and changed into dry clothes in the car.

It was the bareness of the place  
that drew me to it  
time and time again.

So different from the crowded,  
sandier beaches where children  
happily built sandcastles  
as the adults watched or paddled  
in the calmer waters -

only a few miles from Birling Gap.

One very tall Victorian hotel  
stood alone, erect on the landscape  
silhouetted against the sky  
in the photograph we took  
of the three of us sitting hunched over  
bracing the wind,  
sitting on our striped canvas deck chairs.

Here now in Canada, fifty years later  
and a thousand miles inland  
from the nearest sea,  
all is unusually calm

for we have a high cedar hedge

all around our garden  
that shelters us from winds,  
winter and summer, and  
I think of that time in my childhood  
nostalgically.

I can still taste the salt  
of the briny Sussex air,  
taste the blanched flesh of the eel.

Some say, never go back.  
But in a heartbeat I would -  
Such is my dream.

June 10,2006  
Senneville, Québec, Canada

Philippa Lane

# Birthday Poem!

You have set asail  
For yet another year.  
As your youthful age  
Unfortunately begins  
to disappear.  
But never forget that it's bad  
to judge a book by its cover,  
Just remember, you still  
have much to discover.  
Today is your birthday.  
I wish you lots of luck,  
and for your birthday,  
I got you a brand-new

TRUCK!

Mary-Lynn Joyce

(Illustrated by ML)

(March 10th,2012)

(Written while on bus coming here)

81775(March,10th,2012)

(Party held at our home in Senneville, Quebec, Canada)

(Written by my granddaughter, Mary-Lynn J, bringing her unique and delectable  
cake she made herself)

(The poem is written on lined paper and is illustrated by Mary-Lynn J)

Philippa Lane

# Blizzard In St. John's

- For Gregory

Winter's final fury  
unleashed itself  
last night,

Today, St. John's, lies buried  
in a blustering blizzard:  
yes, winter's final fury  
is bestowed this time  
on you and yours,  
my friend.

As Newfoundlanders  
wake today to their cars  
all humped in white,  
hurricanes howling  
through snow-clogged  
streets with all their  
awful might -  
and men, womenfolk  
and children  
grit their teeth and get  
their shovels out...

Here in Montréal,  
it is uncharacteristically  
balmy and mild  
as I start my day  
driving on clean  
snow-scooped roads,  
bright light  
exploding  
around me,  
under sunny, azure skies.

There is no price tag  
for the simple joy I felt

this Sunday afternoon;  
thinking of your vicious  
winter storm,  
I said a prayer or two  
for you, my friend.

(Transfiguration Sunday,  
February 26th,2006)

(Sixty centimeters of snow  
fell in St. John's, Newfoundland  
on this date)

(Senneville, Québec, Canada)

Philippa Lane

# Blue

Blue floats and hovers  
it never comes to rest  
its scent is distant bonfires  
its touch moth-breath

Blue is man-child  
with spiritual eyes  
a stranger in a room  
who isn't one  
soft down on upper lip  
felt without touch

it is dreaming at night  
of what is not and cannot be  
it is gauze-vision  
half-reality

it is a shaky signature  
on a typewritten page  
seen through mist

Blue is pain that is borne alone

it is quena music  
bone-notes quavering over absent flesh  
in death worship

yawns are for want of blue  
and partially for having it

Blue is pigeons  
and siamese cats  
and snow shadows  
it is for ever  
stretching

it is ten billion spindles  
weaving blue fabric endlessly

it is the certain  
uncertainty

(Nov.2004)

(Senneville, Québec)

Philippa Lane

# Breakfast On A Psychiatric Ward

'Does anyone know how to make  
a bed without fitted sheets? ,  
the princess asked,  
as she wafted down  
into the eating room,  
resplendent in brocaded gown,  
satin slippers on her feet,  
her hair so elegantly  
coiffeured.

Our fuzzy minds wondered  
if she was a picture n our heads,  
or really one of us -  
a patient on 5 East?

We couldn't help but glare at her,  
conscious of our own unkempt,  
ruffled hair,  
our borrowed night gowns,  
paper slippers on our feet.

Suddenly, she fainted dead away,  
and it fell into the cream of wheat -  
her crowning glory - a wig,  
exposing a less than lovely head  
slumped sideways on the table,  
crushing a piece of Weston bread.

It seemed offensive, sad to me,  
such dignity got plonked beside  
a cup of tea at ten past eight.  
it was a lesson learned,  
for right away I saw the place  
did not discriminate;

We all shared  
the knack of hiding things -  
like common thieves.





# Colour Poem: Purple

Purple is afraid  
it scuttles into corners  
on all fours  
it reeks  
it shrieks  
and smells of old unopened rooms

it is the flickering eyelid  
of an aging actress  
and the veins  
mapped on leaves  
of frail plants  
in nursing homes who suck thin air

Purple is chiffon dusk  
compliment and pale prayers

it is reading aloud  
the twenty-third psalm  
the noise of ragged breaths  
clawing the air  
a scratching away of calm

Purple is the gas  
that killed Plath  
and the depth  
of her despair

it is the click of the valves  
that stuck and the blood that cooled

Purple is profane

it never gives back  
it hoards  
it preserves grief  
and bottles tears

Purple is half the world

and the side of me in shadow

Philippa Lane

# Crying

Sometimes I don't understand  
Why grownups cry,  
Usually, when I do someone  
Has been mean to me  
But nothing at all seems  
To make grownups cry.

For instance, last July, I got lost  
In a supermarket.  
It was bigger than the one  
We usually shopped at  
And suddenly I realized I had lost  
My father.

I felt how I do when my teacher  
Makes me stand up in class  
For talking, sort of hot and cold,  
So I began talking myself  
Out of it, but it didn't stop me  
From bursting into tears.

I peered at all those passing faces  
But they looked like ships  
Bobbing in a sea of waves, one second  
There and the next gone,  
I wasn't very brave you know.

Then a lady stooped down and her nose  
Almost touched mine  
As she said she would help me find whoever  
It was I had lost.

My hand was sticky from eating candy,  
But she put it in hers  
So I knew she was a motherly type  
And I was glad.

But just then, I saw my Dad  
By the Frozen Foods

And rushed to him.

When I looked back to thank her  
With a smile,  
She was standing in the same place  
Watching us,

With tears falling down her face.  
I don't know why.  
I wasn't crying any more.  
□

Philippa Lane

# Disappointment

Plans are shattered, hopes lost  
Amid a tangle of resentful thoughts:  
The mind receives a dulling thud  
For its excited time has all been spent  
For naught.  
Only the anguish left behind  
Can remind us of the void within,  
And so we force a smile to show  
We do not mind, and hide  
With desperate care, our vacant soul  
And dare forget the disappointment.

Philippa Lane

# Drunk On A Train

He staggered  
from the bistro  
and at a glance  
he looked for all the world  
the usual sort of drunk  
who guzzled down  
a lot of bottled beer

But though his shirt  
was crumpled  
his tie was very straight  
and so I wasn't sure

Toppling on a tightrope  
of feigned sobriety  
he veered down  
where sandwiched  
between the baits and jibes  
this tired old goat  
belched forth at ease  
his malted breaths  
dangling in the awkward air

Before they closed  
in his besotted eyes  
I thought I glimpsed  
a tragedy  
and  
wondered  
if his wife had died

Philippa Lane

# Escape

The wind rushing past me was monstrous wild  
As I clambered to the top of the downs;  
My feet were dirty and aching bad  
When at last I reached the crown.

But what cared I for such trivial things  
When such wonderful nature swept by me:  
The trees and the grass blowing awry  
In the boisterous spring wind,  
Which ruffled my hair and made my face sting.

There was I, a solitary figure,  
Alone on the top of the downs:  
With all of the clouds astir  
And far from any town -  
The sea in the distance  
A single grey line,  
How I felt, how I saw those views  
So fine.

I sat upon a hillock of springy green turf,  
Saw the new buds on the trees;  
And the whole of the world seemed full  
Of new birth - then the wind  
Suddenly dropped to a breeze.

The white chalk paths, so rough and stony,  
Wound higher and higher up each hill,  
And I sat and thought how good to be lonely,  
And for a second all was still.

But I could not have it the way I wished,  
The wind grew louder, the air more chill;  
I saw a path, though knew not to where it lead,  
But I walked and I walked and behind me

Everything once more was still.

.



(May 1955)

(Written after going for a walk on the Willingdon downs.)

Philippa Lane

## Ex-Patria

The beginning of the end of our Canadian winter;  
The ending of a British winter,  
And their gentle spring ahead of ours.  
I always think about these overlapping seasons,  
In the forty-four years I have lived in Québec.

Yes, Québec and all its solitudes:  
I, too, felt solitary within the class system  
in the England I had left behind.  
I was twenty-two when I turned my back on it;  
I simply left it all behind, vowing I'd forget everything  
But the friends whom I loved.  
I left behind familial ties,  
Home-grown attitudes,  
And closed minds;  
I felt relief, like discarding  
A heavy winter overcoat In spring.  
I packed my old school trunk -  
It carried the label of my new address -  
MONTRÉAL  
As I had no residence yet.  
So I set off to a country  
I knew nothing about,  
A country that patriots  
Alluded to with derision  
As my 'Going to the Colonies'.  
Said with such contempt.  
Nevertheless, on a damp November day  
I boarded the 'Empress of Canada'  
Steaming from the docks at Liverpool.

The gusty gales tossed its mightiness  
Into a mere toy ship bobbing on the crest  
Of each tempestuous wave.  
Lurching starboard, then aft, then port,  
In the turgid, cold Atlantic cod-infested waters.  
I left with absolutely no regrets,  
Without a single pang of conscience.  
I left behind the injustice and humiliation

Of my turbulent teenage years spent  
Incarcerated in a convent boarding school  
Run by horrible nuns - but not entirely,  
For the dreadful feelings lingered  
And haunted me like ghosts.

When I left,  
I didn't know anything about  
'That' and 'This-ness',  
Only that I was happy to go.  
My friends were excited for me  
And we said our goodbyes,  
At first giggling like silly schoolgirls,  
Then sobbing into our linen handkerchiefs.  
The others I cared not about.  
I left them slumbering contentedly  
In their all-familiar places -  
Like cats who curl their lips  
And preen their fur, and sleep  
In sunbeams on a carpeted floor.  
Yes, they were much like that -  
Occasionally prowling,  
Testing their predatory powers,  
Maiming a few nesting birds  
And their young,  
Just for the fun of it.  
I left them all sleeping  
Underneath their ancestral  
Counterpanes in their cozy  
Corner of England,  
Oblivious to my absence.

It seemed as if a raging storm  
Had shorn through the thickness  
Of my girth,  
Leaving part of me  
Still rooted in the ground -  
Dislocated, defenceless;  
The stump that remained,  
More an amputation  
Than a dis-settlement.  
Yes, later when they woke,

And found me gone,  
No doubt they judged me  
Not in absentia, but ex-patria;  
A deserter of the realm,  
A place where the venerable words  
Of the brave Horatio Nelson  
(Viscount, no less) rang out:  
'England expects every man will do his duty'.  
But I ran, ran out on them all  
That day in November nineteen sixty-two,  
Not as they supposed for want of a moral code,  
But because I cherished and wanted to save  
The one I had.

One so deeply implanted within my British heart  
It made me feel ashamed that the English  
Still perpetuated a system that took away  
Dignity and self respect.  
That denied equality of man.  
Why had I gone?  
They later wrote:  
But never stopped to think  
My young, impulsive pulse  
Was racing,  
Or that my tenuous frame  
Trembled for adventure,  
Wanting to taste and sense  
Other lands, other peoples;  
To venture westward  
Through the endless.  
Undulating prairie plains of wheat,  
To the turquoise lakes,  
The mountains, springs and rivers.  
To see the grizzly bears,  
The buffalo, the caribou  
In their natural habitat:  
To recapture 'Hiawatha'  
Underneath the giant red-woods of the West -  
I, Minnehaha, Laughing Water.  
Yes, I wanted to see the tepees  
The totem poles and the Indians  
Coined 'Red' by the British

To separate them  
From the Colonial Indians  
They ruled on the other side  
Of the world.  
For 'There's a flag that waves o'er every sea,  
No matter when or where;  
And to treat that flag as aught but the free  
Is more than the strongest dare.  
For the lion-spirits that tread the deck  
Have carried the palm of the brave;  
And that flag may sink with a shot-torn wreck,  
But never float over a slave.  
Its honour is stainless, deny it who can;  
And this is the flag of an Englishman'.  
I had dreams of travelling further  
To other foreign shores,  
To continue on to Billa-Bong Land  
Where the swagmen swaggered  
Their metal cans.  
Where girls were called 'Sheilas'.  
Where, in the outback, the only shade  
Was under the sparse eucalyptus trees;  
The aborigines standing tall  
and watchful standing  
On one leg day and night  
Under darkening, purple skies;  
Or went on their walk-about,  
Mystical,  
Proud,  
Where the narrative poems  
Of 'Banjo' Patterson and Henry Lawson  
Came alive.  
Part of me was an easily frightened child,  
Running like a deer from the dark shadows  
Following me;  
and part a very curious child,  
Impatient to see wild plants and flowers  
Other than the perfumed rambling roses  
Of my homeland.  
I wanted to embrace the space.  
In deserts, where there were cactii and sand,  
Mystical in its imagery.

Spears of marram grass,  
Broken and bent,  
Yet anchored to the dune,  
Whipped by the whistling desert winds,  
Drawing concentric circles in the sand,  
Scribing perfect arcs,  
Better than a schoolboy's compass.  
Where the malleable landscape  
Offered little escape,  
Where there were soft,  
Distant undulations,  
Wriggling plains,  
Golden-blue ribbed sand,  
Where there were patterns  
Of different kinds -  
Some like braided trails,  
or grains of wheat.  
Yes, I admit I had intended to go back,  
Unexpectedly, the plan changed.  
I married for better or worse,  
Then stayed in this courageous land.  
But in a short time I became  
A prisoner of a nasty marital war  
I neither enlisted for nor understood.  
One day my spirit simply broke,  
My hopes and dreams dissolved,  
My soul shrivelled up with all the cruelties  
To which I was exposed.  
After the break up of my marriage,  
I settled in a little village called  
Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue in Québec.  
Close by the St. Lawrence river.  
I raised three very brave children,  
Now long grown up:  
And now with children of their own,  
And I, Nokomis, with sheer joy,  
Sit and hear their dreams, their tales -  
I, so proud of their loving parents  
Who overcame it all.  
In my sixtieth year, I took  
the Oath of Citizenship,  
Swearing allegiance to our Queen,

Now so proud to be Canadian:  
To live in this laid back,  
Egalitarian land.  
My restless spirit finally content,  
Free to enjoy the many gifts  
God has given me.  
Great freedom, space.  
It took me time to understand,  
To realize there really was a plan.  
My heart accepts it to be so,  
That I am finally content  
Just to be.  
Sometimes plain words alone  
Without poetic phrases,  
Are better able to express  
Emotional states of being.  
This is one of these.  
In fact, simplicity.

Philippa Lane

# Felinity

once

I was dead wood in a forest  
flowing with sap

now

I am living in a fantasy  
where the bud unfolds

and

like a cat with its belly full  
bask in a sunbeam

contentedly licking my paws

yes

I cry over spilt milk but the cat  
will lick it up

and

slink outdoors stalking through  
its territory

as

it prowls in its predatorial role  
with stealth and grace

and hunger pains

(Nov.2004

Senneville, Québec)

Philippa Lane



# First Meeting With A Psychiatrist

It seemed a third-rate performance  
of an actor well used to the role,  
the salutary greetings linked in  
a single-line monotone:  
"Comeinsitdownhowareyoumakeyourselfcomfortable."

He waited, swaying to and fro,  
in his vinyl-covered chair,  
puffing on a fat cigar -  
the smoke expertly curled  
by his tongue into rich rings  
of self-aggrandisement.

It was my cue.

I muttered nervously  
about my husband's inane cruelties,  
his unpredictable outbursts of violence,  
his bizarre ideas, the delusions,  
he talking aloud in the shower alone,  
and how I lived in fear of the threats  
to kill us all.

"My children – how can I protect them? "

I spoke in desperation  
to the bald shiny dome of his head  
bent over a notebook,  
as his pen flowed  
and his hand ran on  
in the writing of copious notes,  
never once looking up.

My mind drifted away,  
to a Mandingo town  
along with a large throng  
of other women, assembled at nightfall,  
being chased by men.

I was singled out as the offender,  
stripped naked, tied to a post,  
and as the rod of Mumbo scourged me  
I heard shouts of derision,  
hideous noises filling the cool, dusty air-  
it was a ritual  
in veneration  
of a grotesque idol,  
the shrieks of Mumbo-Jummery  
buzzing in my ears  
like the droning  
of trapped insects.

His false cough brought me back from Africa  
Into this room where we sat.  
It seemed to me  
his eyes were raping me,  
willing me to wantonless veneration.

I noted a couch, cold, clean and vacant,  
like a morgue drawer  
waiting for an occupant.

My performance was over, his now began,  
it started with a dissertation of my ills  
in a spate of unmistakable mummery;  
high-sounding words resonated in the air,  
and the session ended as it had begun,  
words linked in a single-line monotone:  
"Time's up come back next week and take these pills".

A prescription was thrust in my hand  
as he helped me up and led me out -  
the door slammed behind me,  
rude in its definition.

Shaking, I tore the paper up  
And scattered it on the floor.

Soon night would cast its wand  
changing me into a child  
aghast in the dark,

tiny hands contracted to shiny cones,  
clutching the bed sheets in fear -

waiting for the boogey-man to appear.

(Baie d'Urfé, Québec  
1968)

Philippa Lane

# Forgotten Date

The moon was full that night,  
The air so close and warm,  
Scented with fast-dying flowers  
That still remained in woody bowers.  
Oak apples hung dipped in molten light,  
While gathering clouds hung low  
Foretelling of a storm to come.

Quiet were the birds,  
And quieter still the trees,  
Like watchmen round the church  
With inkept breath, motionless  
For fear of waking death.

Musty tombs filled with icy chill  
O'er run with nettles, greybrown moss,  
Dead flowers drooped in confusion  
Over graves or entwined  
Around a cross.

Forgotten each mound,  
Forgotten too the dead?  
Leaving weeds to climb  
Those crooked plaques  
And over all to spread.

Amid the stones and unkempt grass  
Stood the ancient church,  
Her tapering spire pointed at the sky  
In protestation,  
Imploring it to withhold the invasion  
That it warned.  
Inside, rays of moonlight filtered  
Through the stained-glass window's  
Vibrant shades, setting fire  
To brass plaques  
Beneath which the dead were laid.

Mice stirred in the gloom

And saw the light upon each tomb,  
The dust arose in spiral dance  
Through silvery, rosehewn shafts  
Wafting higher to the belfry  
Where bats hung half asleep,  
Half in a trance.

The scene was sinister and grey,  
The pressing silence broken only  
By screeching, echoing cries  
Of some awakened birds,  
And the fluttering of dead leaves  
By a gust of wind were caught.

Such was that night, that All Soul's Eve:  
The storm arising, black clouds rolling  
Through angry, pregnant skies.  
When the dead were meant to rise  
From their decaying beds, to heave  
Their grassy coverlets  
From off their coffins  
And walk the night restlessly  
To the tolling of a phantom bell  
And men's loud scoffing.

But no shapeless spirits rose,  
No bell was heard,  
No ghosts went strolling:  
The graves were still,  
The dead in sweet repose.

(England, 1958)  
(Romney Marsh, Kent)

Philippa Lane

# Good Days

Days go by  
Always so fast  
The yellow sun  
Always lasts 'cos  
Good days go by  
Ever so fast

Philippa Lane

# Hard To Understand

Hard to understand  
(ode to my cat Louie)

Red  
it makes me think  
of deep inside  
where my heart lies

it makes me think of louie  
it's hard to understand you're gone  
it's hard to understand, oh why so hard?

you used to cuddle with me as if i were your teddy bear  
but now you cuddle no more  
you lie in a puddle of tears

it's hard to understand

(Daisy, March 2005, age 11)

Philippa Lane

# Holmhurst

I remember the many times  
I sauntered schoolgirl-style  
Beneath the beeches tall,  
Their leafy parasols  
Shading my young head  
From noon-day sun.  
A filigree of nature's finery  
In copper veridian,  
The supple pines  
That swayed and creaked  
In the breeze,  
And the sturdy yew hedge  
With her aura of calm.

I remember the stagnant pond,  
The deathbed likeness  
Of her green-slime surface  
Lying very still.  
The rhododendrons a dark fringe  
About her.

Through stone archway  
The magnolia's waxy blooms  
Outstretched on backcloth  
Of cerulean blue: the bamboos  
Whispering their tropical psalm,  
Intriguing me.

I remember the sandy paths  
Leading to the woods,  
And the cool of walking there  
After service had been said  
When the heat beat down elsewhere:  
Passing the fields of buttercups  
Where cows grazed  
And skylarks sung,  
Passing the burial ground  
Neat with crosses.



I remember how on a clear day  
We would gaze at the distant town  
And the thin grey line of sea  
That seemed to beckon us  
To explore beyond  
Our fortified world.

How in spring's fresh air  
The crocuses erupted  
On the sloping lawn,  
Gold and purple hues  
Glistened in the sun  
On the dewy green grass,  
Then summer's flowers  
Sprayed the air  
With the sweetest scents,  
And when they passed,  
Autumn came and went  
With one long dying sigh,  
Then winter's naked form  
Shook and shivered  
Under an oatmeal sky.

I remember the pebbled terrace,  
The faded mosaic spelling  
Better yesteryears,  
And regal steps descending  
Fan-wise to lower lawn,  
Where the mulberry stooped  
Her great old age,  
And Queen Anne's statue stood,  
A relic of the past  
Not to be forgotten.

I remember the tall stone chimneys  
Set high on the roofs,  
The shuttered windows  
And creeped walls:  
How on a winter's night  
The wind would moan and sigh  
All through the house,  
The cold crouching in corners

Soaking in the flagstone floors  
To chill us all.

I remember the narrow passages  
Fading into darkness,  
The old oak panels  
And dark, strong beams:  
Trite, girlish laughter  
Echoing in the catacomb  
Of ante-rooms, harbouring  
Our childish dreams.

Now at seventeen, nursing a  
Wistful heart, I look back  
To that house upheld by faith,  
To its people cocooned  
Within its walls,  
For its sheltered life  
I have had to leave  
And enter another strange  
And crude; but its beauty  
I shan't forget,  
Nor its constant mood,  
And pray God it will forever  
Remain unspoiled,  
A sanctity of holy good.

(01/01/58  
St Leonards-on-Sea, Sussex, England)

Philippa Lane

# Home-Coming

The dog still shed its hair,  
The counterpane wasl torn,  
I thought your love  
Would put it all in order  
When I came.  
I was astonished by the dirt,  
Was it left deliberately  
To satisfy my shame?

You praised yourself  
For coping with the children  
In my absence,  
But to bring me home  
Without a single spoken word  
Was unforgiveable,  
Like stamping on a flower  
Already dead.

Philippa Lane

# I Weep For You...

I

I weep for you, though no tears fall,  
I watch you,  
Your spirit broken.

World War II RAF veteran,  
It took so long because, regardless,  
You always soldiered on.

Now your skin is like a fallen autumn leaf,  
Transparent, delicate,  
Too sensitive to touch

Because of taut  
And damaged nerves  
From a dreadful illness.

Your tenuous frame riddled  
In unexpected neuropathic pain -  
It is strangely sad

You are a broken man.

My gift of loving you is all but lost,  
For without touch, it is hard  
To express my caring

When you talk despairingly.

II

But my children and their children  
Still love you soundly,  
You can be glad of that.

They remember walking in the rain with you  
Spotting outcrops, ice fishing  
And the birds of Point Pelee.

Do you still remember that?

Then - such carefree happiness,  
Even blissful  
I would say.

III

These past twenty years  
I have seen your pain and anger  
Rise and fall like loud explosions in the air

Jarring my mind.

Once, so long ago it seems,  
You held my hand, read poems to me,  
And showed me garden flowers

With Latin names,  
Wild plants in the shady woods,  
Wherever your heart went, you led me too.

Once you held me gently in your arms  
And took me to Oka on the ferry boat,  
Carrying us away from all memories

Of hospital just for one day.

You gave me unending loyalty  
And a house to make into a home  
For all of us.

IV

Sometimes, the past caught me up  
In its webbed arms, alarm bells  
Clanging in my mind:

Flashbacks struck me like a cobra,  
Stunning me, flaying me,  
It all seemed surreal.

But now I live a death.

You that loved so deeply  
Are no more, I think.

Your corporeal life is fading now,  
Your rugged spirit challenged so,  
Tested to its limits.

I wonder why you never walked with me  
Holding hands like other couples do?  
All this time, I have sipped coffee

In the village quite alone,  
Gypsy woman roaming,  
Loneliness a constant in my day.

I often drag my heart around,  
Bitter memories plaguing me,  
One whole decade blacked out.

Now hope stagnates  
Like a slimy green pond  
Yet teeming with life underneath

Its murky waters.

V

You see me well and wonder why

Would you rather see me  
On the Prince-of-Wales' couch  
Sleeping each day out?

Sorry, but I refuse to do that now,  
I snipped the tethered bond -  
that relationship is null and void

An empty shell.

You would rather see me on the couch,  
I think, enabling me to turn  
Into a helpless child again.

Then you could nurture me  
Feeling comfortable,  
And talk with the neighbours

Who ask: 'How is she today? ',  
'Such a shame', you say,  
Yes, another day of living gone -

Awful suffering needlessly.

VI

I always bear in mind  
Your childhood pain,  
The story I know so well

But you fly into red rages  
And put me in Coventry.  
Then, all you have to say

Is: 'Shut up, woman',  
To anything I have to say,  
So in anger and dismay

I turn away from you,  
You who have cared  
So much for me,

Seem like a stranger,  
Who no longer wants to share  
Moments together.

I am sad indeed.

VII

To you now I say:  
Stay away from me:

I need no more.

But if you still can truly love,  
Please share your twilight  
Dreams with me.

For now I am strong and free,  
I scale the clouds and fly  
Into blue heavens

Of eternity.

Philippa Lane

(Senneville, Québec)  
(April 5th,2005)

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Philippa Lane



# Identities

There is always a doubt  
Never quite visible

Like a coin thrown in  
A muddy puddle

Rings of uncertainty  
Extending beyond

One's self

Where nervous hands  
Falter and grope

Into nothingness  
Where eyes blur

Trying to focus  
On what is unsure

Am I the coin  
Or the puddle?

(Senneville,1998) .

Philippa Lane

## Lgh Four East 1968

We just withered away like plants  
that hadn't been watered  
Nor had enough light;  
You were bloated with insulin,  
I shocked by shock treatments.

The staff, quacks and nurses,  
Dried us in towels of tenderness,  
And powdered us with condescending words,  
Then strapped us tightly down  
on beds that felt like boards -  
Our screams were clear.  
"The blood is gushing from our hearts-  
Find a tourniquet so it may stop."

They stared and shook their heads  
And blinked at us:  
'Dears, you are like droopy plants,  
Waiting for our special care;  
We will give you chlorophyll injections  
And feed you green Fertitabs in here  
So your flimsy stems will, once again,  
Stand erect, in which case  
You will at least be saleable  
When you leave here,  
Or decorate an empty waiting-room,  
Or some hall table, or sit on the sill  
In a dying man's room.  
But, remember,  
You must cooperate in here'.  
"Who are you", we said, 'for we are  
Having trouble with our souls."

'We are Doctors of Disgrace  
And Surgeons of Despair -  
There isn't any space -we don't  
Touch souls in here.  
They are like bubbles floating  
Out of reach,

That burst  
And sting our eyes -  
We hate souls Here."

We strained our minds through written lines,  
We sieved our memories for hope;  
We watched the ink blots blur,  
As they swabbed away our tears,  
So wasted There.

"We flew too near the sun,  
Our skin is burned,  
Our blisters ooze...  
We have to find the Middle Air",  
I said.

You said: 'Let's get out of Here.  
We must go home instead  
To convalesce; the sun still shines  
And blisters aren't so bad  
Compared to Here."

Philippa Lane

## Mandy (1970 - 1976)

## For Venetia

What do you say to a child of ten  
when she asks  
'Will she die? ', 'Will she die? '  
and you know  
she's seeing that scene  
on the road  
over and over again,  
hearing the hit,  
her own terrible scream,  
seeing the car speed on  
without a care  
for her beloved Mandy.

When a ten-year old asks,  
'How long have she and I been together? '  
you know six years  
was long enough  
for a precious bond to grow,  
you know the fondness grew  
as she grew nearer  
to her own flowering.

It's no use saying  
that time will dry the tears  
on her cheeks, though they will,  
it's no use reminding her  
of the barking  
or the fines  
the nuisance of scattered hair  
the neighbour's angry stares,  
or shovelling the dirt -

She loves too simply for that -

The kind of love  
that asks to keep her collar  
if she dies.

And she did, of course,

later that night,  
in a hospital cage,  
cold and bare,  
with drugs in her veins  
to damn the pain  
of punctured lungs  
her glazed eyes  
no longer knowing  
none of us were there.

I held my daughter  
close to me,  
knowing  
she must consummate  
her love with sobbing  
and with tears,

It was her time,  
Her definition,  
To cry out  
her contrition.

When I knew her tail  
would never wag again,  
we cried together,  
fused in a simple grief,

Our minds touching  
her thick fur,  
seeing her trusting  
amber eyes  
looking at us.

Yes, I held her close  
as she mourned  
the death  
of her first true love  
whose life  
so abruptly ended  
in a slump  
on an empty road.



# My Grampa

Someone who loves, friendly  
as doves, who cares and will  
always be there.

(Freya Rothwell-Bodycomb, Age 11)

(April 2007)

(Senneville, Québec)

(Original illustrated with hearts and flowers)

Philippa Lane

# My Heart Will Go On

My heart will never end, I  
Will spend life as it is.  
Flowers growing tall in the  
Month of Winter, Spring,  
Summer, and Fall. The  
Butterflies flying through  
Proving how much I love you.

This poem was written by my grandchild,  
Freya Rothwell-Bodycomb, Age 10

June 4,2006  
Senneville, Québec, Canada

Philippa Lane



# My Parents Sometimes Fight - For Tim

I wish my parents wouldn't fight –  
I feel like a cat curled up in a corner  
With no one noticing it.

They act like robots out of control,  
Moving clumsily, crashing gears,  
Not like parents at all.

They sound like horrid black crows –  
It would be ridiculous  
If it wasn't so serious.

When it's a really bad fight  
I feel bloodless and cold  
Like a victim of Dracula.

When my parents fight  
I'm really scared,  
Because I think

They will divorce  
Or separate  
And leave me.

When I argue with my sister  
it's usually because  
she cheats at cards,

But when my parents quarrel  
It's like unravelling  
A ball of messed-up string-

Hard to find the start.

I think of words to help,  
But they get tangled in my throat  
And don't come out.

I'd like to be a bear for a while,

And crawl into a hole  
or hibernate for good,

Or run away

But usually I end up  
Going to bed in my clothes  
And lying awake instead.

They might not separate,  
But I can't be sure, can I?  
Earthquakes happen now and then,

It's the possibility I don't like  
As if something bad is tailing me  
Or a sign was on my back

Saying  
"My Parents Fight"  
And everyone is staring.

Philippa Lane

# Purple

Purple is afraid  
it scuttles into corners  
on all fours  
it reeks  
it shrieks  
and smells of old unopened rooms

it is the flickering eyelid  
of an aging actress  
and the veins  
mapped on leaves  
of frail plants  
in nursing homes who suck thin air

Purple is chiffon dusk  
complaine and pale prayers

it is reading aloud  
the twenty-third psalm  
the noise of ragged breaths  
clawing the air  
a scratching away of calm

Purple is the gas  
that killed Plath  
and the depth  
of her despair

it is the click of the valves  
that stuck and the blood that cooled

Purple is profane

it never gives back  
it hoards  
it preserves grief  
and bottles tears

Purple is half the world

and the side of me in shadow

Philippa Lane

# Reflection

in copious tears  
and terrible pain  
i've fought an illness  
I disdain  
for in my brain  
circuits disconnect and jam

In refrain  
'midst all the strife  
like a limpet  
i've clung to you  
my rock  
and always  
sung my song of hope  
'i am' -  
believing it  
to be true.

now, once again,  
i must make a tryst  
to live again  
not merely to exist  
to find the courage  
to forgive -  
to remember  
then forget.`

Philippa Lane

# Riding

Jane,  
Remember,  
Ride not with reins  
Though they are there,  
But sense the beast  
Beneath—  
The heritage  
She carries in her breast,  
Her very cerebrale  
Are yours to share.

True,  
Her mane-tossed freedom  
You'll control,  
Her rippled power  
You'll guide,  
And the beat of her dramatic feet  
Will echo in your mind  
And hide the depth of your despair.

But,  
Quite by accident one day,  
Your hearts will nudge  
And side by side  
You'll ride free of all doubts,  
And beautifully, so beautifully,  
Unaware.

Oh, Jane  
Remember  
Just her spirit ride,  
For equestrianism  
Is nothing but a simple mating  
Of your humbleness  
And her great pride.

(Summer,1968)



# Seducer

it captured me one summer,  
swiftly, i courting  
its magic light,  
frantically attracted

against its naked form  
i battered my frail moth wings  
never hearing It  
retreat in mockery.

i heard instead crescendoed  
notes of hope,  
and gentle sounds -  
apple bough tapping  
on the windowpane  
like an old man's finger  
beckoning me  
from one bed  
to warm another  
made of down  
where I could pull  
the covers up on all reality  
and listen to the roof-music  
of falling rain.

not caring I a prisoner of its guile,  
did watch the grass run wild  
not noticing, I left the books  
to gather dust, and slept  
all summer through  
on fantasy.

autumn came  
its dead leaves  
fluttered down  
onto my own lifeless,  
blanched face  
that expressed  
my inner deadness.



Then I awaited winter  
with a sullen dread  
i forced myself  
to listen to the tinkering tunes  
of ice-embroidered trees  
fearing that if a silence  
came between  
my precious voice  
might pause  
and freeze in it  
and speak no more to me.

(1968)

Philippa Lane

# She, Who Shall Be Nameless

She, who shall be nameless,  
was conceived last summertime  
under a vast, shimmering stellary  
under a waxing crescent moon  
on the banks of Lac Macouronne

- As Selene smiled

- And the Heavens approved

Now, in an opal April  
her genesis is near  
soon she will leave behind  
the nascent waters  
the darkling womb  
and be thrust into a brighter light

- Her very first day on this earth

- Blessed by Gaea.

(April 27,2009)  
(Senneville, Quebec, Canada)

Philippa Lane

# Simplificatiion (Recovery From Cyclic Depression)

yes, my torment has gone  
and, more remarkable  
i seem unharmed  
the machine of flesh and blood  
still stands the demons cast off  
as naturally as a winter's overcoat  
in spring

suffering has gone  
much as a boarder  
comes to stay for a while  
then leaves  
the vacant room  
speaks In echoes  
holding the occasion

in its emptiness

strange  
but this momentous time  
feels quite ordinary

there is no dialogue  
no musical score  
no cast save me  
and if I could express  
my feeling visually  
it would be  
to see a woman  
walking on a moor  
her face sun-kissed  
her expression calm -  
wild grasses parting  
under her bare feet  
the bruised flatness  
showing her presence  
the air suffused  
with the scent  
of opening clover

Her shadow falls behind  
but she does not turn  
to court uncertainty  
instead she hugs herself  
wrapped warmly  
In a shawl of safety  
with no memory of pain  
she treads the landscape  
of exhilaration  
radiantly

There is no script, no sponsor here  
no commercial enterprise  
the actor gleans no fees -  
a documentary in fact

Philippa Lane

# Skiing

There's magic in the mountain-tops,  
there, where the sky begs  
to be eaten in turquoise  
gulps of joy -  
There, where spirits are pumped  
with ether air, danger  
lurking everywhere,  
my heart aghast with fear.  
There, where the white-spaced  
glory beneath beckons my angled pride  
to thrust myself over the brink  
of all reason,  
courting suicide.  
Seduced by the stimulant of speed,  
gravity tugging at my sleeve,  
I glide down  
the slopes of virgin snow,  
basting trails  
between the spruce and pine -  
a bird's tail of white dust on every turn -  
Then breathless at the foot,  
look up and ask myself  
What is the ratio of thrill to time?

Philippa Lane

(Senneville, Quebec, Canada)

(March 11,2011)

88281

(This poem is dedicated to my daughter, Venetia) 63555

Philippa Lane

# Springs

I am lying in the garden  
and I see that, high above  
the cottonwood's  
oustretched hands  
squeeze the finger spaces  
in between the leaves  
and cornflower sky -  
and at the very top  
the tree is ceaselessly  
patrolled by restless wings.

So this is the Calendar spring  
dazzling eyes that have strained  
too long in winter tunnels  
yes this is the Calendar spring

a time when pores open  
to swallow the sun  
and bare feet  
fondle the warm  
thawed earth -  
the soft pillowed air  
sliced by blue blades  
the swallows weaving  
invisible patterns of love

but I listen to the sparrows' songs  
and choose to sing with them  
pleibean residents of my garden

for there is comfort  
in their ordinariness  
an easy way with them

yes I sing with the sparrows  
my same old song of hope  
to match their time  
yet knowing  
Spring is seasonless

for not long ago  
when ice locked me in  
swallow wings beat  
inside me fanning a tiny spark  
of life still flickering  
in a remote corner  
of myself

Philippa Lane

# That Evening

As we relaxed in easy chairs,  
And heard each other - yet did not,  
We recounted our past loves again  
And sipping beer  
did drink nostalgia down,  
'Til drunk on our thoughts  
did draw together.

For you did smell the scent of roses  
From the window, and I did smell  
The pipe smoke in his room,  
And we wondered, didn't we?

For basking in the warmth of memories  
Our present pains were eased,  
And through a common bond of weakness  
Did embrace so tenderly.

In that fettered time emerged a friendship,  
No longer chrysalis-confined,  
But past-regardless, necessary,  
Testing its wings so trepidly  
Did fly into the waiting light.

Philippa Lane



# The Bear

i saw a bear  
not just any ordinary bear  
a bear wearing polka dotted underwear  
he was so suprised when i arrived  
he had a heart attack and the poor thing died

Philippa Lane

# The Call Of A Wood Pigeon

Lying awake in my dormitory  
I listen and from far away  
I hear a bird calling me -  
Softly it comes,  
Softly it goes,  
Inviting,  
Exciting  
My tame contentment -  
Leading me to suppose  
Its owner is a kingly bird.  
Softly it comes,  
Softly it goes.  
And where the firs, dark, morose  
Their red barks set close  
On damp-mossened ground -  
There is the source  
And loud is the sound.

1951, England)

Philippa Lane

# The Cally Bird

Yes, I'd been gone a long, long time  
In my soul and in my head,  
A'praying the deadness would leave,  
That life would flow in my veins instead.

Then one summer morn,  
As if in answer to my prayer,  
The Cally Bird flew right threw  
The open window of my room,

& as if to prove the myth were true,  
It gazed at me so steadfastly  
& I returned its gaze - it came  
Almost like a warning for me  
To heed its magical ways.

Then into its beak and feathered frame  
It took my fears and took my shame,  
Arrested the anguish & the pain,  
Chased the shadows from my mind,

Leaving me feeling I was sane.

Nothing was said, nothing was sung  
As it flew away to Cally-Bird Land.

All I heard was the whirring of wings  
As it carried my sickness out of sight,  
Out of the darkness of my night,  
Into the golden light of the sun.

The demons that had lived  
In my head day and night,  
Were mysteriously dead and gone,  
Buried in the man-made grave  
I'd been rescued from.

Yes, my soul was a'living,  
My spirit shone,

It shone like the sun  
& the moon & the stars in one -

I was back in this life, a'feeling  
The joy as well as the strife.

No, there's no need  
To carry a gun any more,  
'Cos I've drawn myself  
A spiritual map  
To travel through life unafraid -

No longer unsure.

So I sing to the mythical Bird-of-the-sun,  
I sing in praise of his magical ways!

Om! Om mani padme hum!  
Om! Om mani padme hum!

Alleluiah!  
Alleluiah!

Amen.

(Senneville, Canada  
June 1990)

Philippa Lane

# The Snowdrop

Into a frosty world she is born,  
Pure and delicate,  
Her head nods gently  
In the breeze  
That silver morn doth bring.

Meekest of all flowers,  
She proudly stands,  
Bringing joy to the hearts of man  
Who glimpses her in woody bowers.

Her petalled bell holds hope,  
Sweetness fills her stem,  
& in her frostiness  
She keeps her yearly promise -

The longed-for warmth  
Of yet another Spring.

Philippa Lane

# The Unimportance Of Being Me

They say

Love makes the world  
go round

That Hate is really out-of-date  
Although it still is found

It seems

Sex is here to stay  
indefinitely

That Lust is a must

Especially today

But me  
I need not be  
It matters not a jot  
If I get hot  
Or cold  
Or bold  
Or scold another  
Or love  
Or laugh  
Or cry  
Or lose my mother

Life goes on

And would continue  
should I die

But I alive sit wondering why

No-one seems  
To claim the blame

For this

unflattering  
so shattering  
Thought

Of me not mattering.

(London, UK)

(1960)



# Time Span

Once a world that span,  
And spinning took me with it giddily:  
Its crazy circumference I shared.  
It was a place that pined perplexity,  
That sought perception on a plain  
Set far apart. Too fast it span  
To hold a single memory,  
But glimpses were abundant  
Along the dizzy ride.

Then, a world that slowing down  
Showed contours, colours:  
The slackened pace produced proximity,  
& sounds and shapes  
& heat and cold became apparent.

Time became more lenient:  
The pause made tangibility possible.  
Starved hearts were fed  
And tired bodies given impetus  
To carry on to country unexplored.

But Time made no allowance  
For pleasure and ran faster and faster,  
'Til pulses raced into confusion.

Love lay on the brink of an abyss  
& waking became frightened,  
But passion, impatient,  
Made another move  
& all was swallowed up  
In the gaping mouth  
Of mental death -

Flashes of felicity  
Forgotten with the numbness.

Now a world that revolves quite normally:  
That is an equilibrium of certainty,



A guarantee of unextraordinary.

Philippa Lane

# Waiting

I

It seems I have been waiting  
for most of my life,  
for something.

And now two years  
before I become  
a septuagenarian

I can see back to those  
waiting times, wanting  
something miraculous

To happen -  
Damn!  
It never did.

I stood on life's platform  
suitcase in hand  
ready to leave  
But the train was always late,  
or never came  
at all.  
Just a chug-chug  
In the distance  
driving me mad.

So I stayed.

II

Now here I am  
weary of waiting,  
All worn out.

But I can leave  
now if I want to,  
it just means

more waiting with  
bated breath and  
wondering.

For I can choose  
joy and beauty  
to surround me  
like a cashmere shawl,  
soft and seducing,  
beckoning.

Every day of my life,  
I try to remember  
NOW is all we have.

And now  
a little older,  
if not wiser,

I sing along in jubilation.

(WORK IN PROGRESS)

(August 18th 2008)  
(Senneville, Quebec, Canada)

Philippa Lane

# What Is The You I Love

What is the you I love?  
Stag-proud, clashing antlers  
with the world,  
Then watch again  
& see you tossed and hurled  
Like a rag doll by an angry child.

What is the you I love?  
Limpet-stubborn, clinging  
To the proud womb of your invention,  
Pregnant with hope,  
(Time hanging on your shoulders  
Like a wet cloak) ,  
The foetus aborted in the ninth month.

I die a little for my heart is yours.

What is the you I love?  
Fiancé-past, your sobs  
Echoing in my mind even now.  
Helplessly I watch you touch  
Your spoilt rose, Its dewdrop  
now your tear.

I smell its tainted scent  
And so do you; thorn-scratched,  
You chase your thoughts  
Down a million corridors of doubt.

I am sad for I do not dream.

What is the you I love?  
Husband-close, stirring to meet  
Me in the night; our sticky love-flesh  
Quick to share, the twisting,  
twining of our bodies  
Interlocked like vines,  
Love juices exchanged  
In strong embrace.

I am glad for me are one.

What is the you I love?  
Dove-gentle, rocking tiny bundle  
Of infant flesh to sleep.  
I watch and see you smile  
With tender eyes at her -  
Egg-shell china  
In your work-toiled hands,  
Now softer than a spaniel's mouth  
To hold your Billy-lid.

I weep,  
    still weak,  
        & delight because she is ours.

What is the you I love?  
What is you?  
Man,  
crusader,  
father,  
lover,  
husband,  
friend...

Not understanding why I love,  
I do, and you are mine.

Philippa Lane

# Worlds

I tried to show you my world  
As might a child its secret hiding place,  
But you chose to close the door  
On it & nailed the entrance tighter.

The hammer hammered on  
And sent me mad.

I tried to understand the sense  
Of wheels and steel designs,  
But the tripping In and out of worlds  
Caused too much pain  
& bred an anemic state of mind  
So finally I settled in my nest  
Of words and dreams  
& climbed alone  
the hills of discontent.

You live in one world, I another,  
Knowing separate ecstasies,  
But the middle world where we exist  
Is but a dormitory in which to rest,  
A place to keep the children neatly dressed,  
To pretend at being sane.

Nudging shoulders here  
Like strangers in a crowded room,  
I watch myself corrode & fall apart from me,  
Choking from this cancer  
Of convenience.

Philippa Lane

# Yellow

Yellow is the sun of childhood  
the certain day  
the fine silk strands  
of youthful years  
and wearing them  
in a simple dress  
of pale shantung  
natural delicate  
rustling against warm thighs

Yellow is a daisy-chain of memories  
picking primroses in the woods  
on Mothering Sunday  
mailing them home in a tin box -  
the flowers arranged on damp moss

sandals on sea fronts  
Italian ice-cream  
English mustard in a blue glass pot  
Welsh rarebit and tea  
with my father on visiting days.

Yellow is perfect dawn -  
a bouquet of open beaks in a nest  
promising next year  
and the year after next

it is the pure primary before the smudges  
of growing up clouds it with tears

Yellow is a hurting joy like Chopin

it clings with tendrils to my mind  
the jaundiced hopes  
the cancelled love  
the chances left behind  
all sprawl in sallow clusters  
on the canary vine  
taunting me

Yellow is the chink of light under the door-  
the handle I cannot seem to turn

(Nov.2004)

(Senneville, Québec)

Philippa Lane