

1992, What I Wanted

by Freeman Ng

A lifetime ago, I wrote this poem and read it aloud to the woman I was dating:

I Want

dancing *every*
kind there is opera
the pure sound plays
movies yet longer
walks to food talk *O*
Apollo lord of the light books
and bright enthusiasms I
want to bring you to my friends *around*
whose arm Kali
your faces brightening Tim
the struggle for words *no more*
than a pivot your steady look the children
most dance *the weak pipe* and Shakespeare
in the Warrens' basement my nieces their shyness
and your touch I want the
hours *the undipped wing* present
in our sure hands to
sound Briggflatts' rhythms articulate
Jakarta's Gunn and Eliot and your worlds the more music
for the fell's late spring I want
Yet delay! to move beyond
this shrill prosaic verse (and:
every kind of poem there is) unseeing
and imageless *between two waves* the womb
of your work to raise the world your ways
with Edith *the unreal breathing* you
in sorrow impossible to conceive the dark

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as yet inaccessible for the lucence
of your joys (*is always danced above*
the hollow place) *each*
pebble

Reading it now, I'm struck by how little my tastes have changed since those days that I consider the dawn of my adulthood. The italicized phrases were quotes from my favorite poems and books, most of which have remained at the very top of the lists attached to my various online profiles.

Basil Bunting's long poem "Briggflatts" is still my favorite poem of all time. I once dreamed of taking a trip to Northumbria with a lover and reading the poem together on the fells. I've since obtained an audio file of Bunting himself reading it, which I often listen to on my shuttle ride to work, or in the odd evening when I need to remind myself what I'm about.

I'm actually still in touch with Peter Dale Scott, a former poetry professor of mine and the author of *Coming to Jakarta*, the book that politicized me.

I still have fragments of Eliot's "Wasteland" floating around in my head from memorizing it in high school, and have yet to love opera more than during those brief scenes in the movie *Amadeus* where the Salieri character holds forth lovingly and resentfully on the operas of Mozart.

I'm still a big fan of Thom Gunn and Robert Pinsky, and am eagerly awaiting/hoping for the next (final?) Earthsea novel from Ursula LeGuin.

I still make a point of being involved in the lives of children, and hope to read Shakespeare with the current group - a grandniece and nephew, and a friend's daughter - as soon as they're old enough. I

still like dancing, though it's been a while since I've done any.

I still walk long distances. I still yearn for the inaccessible dark.

I still want Linda.

