

Dear *Chaim*

Your poem "O Freedom!" was, you say, written to your wife, and is for both her and your people. You ran back and forth between your typewriter and her, revisingrevisingrevising till you were, yet profoundly also were not, bored with the whole thing.

And you say that the longer you worked on it, the softer the focus became. Was it also, or even primarily, written to God? And for God? And to and for your people? You had, I say, the courage to let the comfort of addressee-certainty go--to let the lines and boundaries soften, become osmotic.

When you, Loree, and I were talking about the poem, you referred to "John Dunne," and I thought you meant the homophone "John Donne," whom apparently I was thinking of (as my favorite 17th-c. metaphysical poet) because your poem reminded me of his mystical freedom to pass through skinbags ["no man is an island"] and from superficial to profound sexual and then human-divine relationship: "romantic" in the most human sense....which, after you left our home, passed in my mind over to the following two centuries, to the English romantic-nature poets of the Lake Region. And an image swam into view--green, blue, gray, red; Loree (red coat) a tiny spot sitting on the unbelievably green grass in mid-apse of Tintern Abbey on a bright day with deep shadows....The whole roofless church a gray prayer arms Jew-like uplifted to God, the whole church a tower because at the time of building the government would not permit the building of church towers, so the people expressed their defiance by towering the whole church.... and the incredibly blue sky. We must bring that colorslide to your home for your enjoyment, and would not be surprised if you were to match it....

....so "Tintern Abbey" [my mind moving, as so often, from the visual to the verbal]; how like your poem is Wordsworth's as his meditation, while looking at the Abbey, passed from thoughts of the most beloved woman in his life (his sister) to Beyond:

FOR I HAVE LEARNED
TO LOOK ON NATURE, NOT AS IN THE HOUR
OF THOUGHTLESS YOUTH . . . AND I HAVE FELT
A PRESENCE THAT DISTURBS ME WITH THE JOY
OF ELEVATED THOUGHTS; A SENSE SUBLIME
OF SOMETHING FAR MORE DEEPLY INTERFUSED,
WHOSE DWELLING IS THE LIGHT OF SETTING SUNS,
AND THE ROUND OCEAN AND THE LIVING AIR,
AND THE BLUE SKY, AND IN THE MIND OF MAN

—WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

On your poem you wrote "Willis/Loree....Exegesis?!" You soft-focused when I said "Are we to talk about exegeting this, or about implications of this for biblical exegesis?" You said "Yes!" What else? Love, faith, and reason--all three are needed for true Scripture-exegesis.

OVER

Wills / Love
Elegies?!
↑
CHAM

O Freedom! O Freedom!
O Freedom over me!
And before I'd be a slave
I'd be buried in my grave
And go home to my Lord and be free.

I tied you with a cord to me,
To drink my life's sweet juice.
Now, as oft as not, the flow's to me, the gift is yours.
— Together we're apart now, together we are free.

O Freedom

The times I held you up, the times I held you down!
So hard to walk, so hard to watch!
Now you skip beside me, in a mild and easy way.
— Together we're apart now, together we are free.

O Freedom

I see you here, a quiet cat, attentive to my voice.
I talked, you heard; I said, you did.
Now you've learned to learn: yourself to teach:
— Together we're apart now, together we are free.

O Freedom

I said to you: How fair thou art; come be my love.
Tight, how tight you held to me; my arm your comfort was.
Now your breath is warmth against my life-scared heart.
— Together we're apart now; together we are free.

O Freedom

O be like this forever: a friend to lie beside me.
For now you know how sweetly we have loved,
And now I've learned to spend as well as keep.
— Together we're apart now; together we are free.

O Freedom

with heart - attack
Goul? Susan? Forces still...
Jung

Rabbi Chaim Stern, who brought the text Sept 29
(with a note to Susan)