

BISHOP'S "FIVE FLIGHTS UP"

Sometimes it's the shoes,
the tying and untying, the bending of the heart
to put them on, take them off, the rush of blood
between the head and feet, my face, sometimes,
if I could see it in the moment, astonished.

Other times the stairs,
three or four at most, "flights" we call them,
as if to mock the wings we'll never have,
the fifth floor the one to kill the breath
and chill the air, where the bird in the building

flies to first. Love, too,
a leveler, a dying all its own, the parts left
~~left behind not to be replaced~~
behind not to be replaced, unspeakable as silence,
like rising in the night at 3:00 a.m. to watch
the snow or the dead leaf fall, the rings around

the streetlight in the rain, and then the rain,
the red fist of the heart opening and closing
on its own, almost without me.

the streetlight in the rain,
and then the rain, the red fist of the heart
opening and closing on its own, almost without me.
If I could sleep standing, if I could walk out
with my eyes closed and let the dark take me in....

When I bend to tie my shoes

I see

Sometimes it's the shoes,
the tying and untying,
the bending of the heart
to put them on, take them off,
the rush of blood between
the head and feet, my face, sometimes,
if I could see it, astonished.

Otherwise, in a poet's phrase,
it's "five flights up,"
though climbing three or four
can kill the breath enough
to chill the air. Love, too,
can be a leveler, a dying all its own,
including the imagination.

Bishop's "Five Flights Up"

Sometimes it's the shoes,
the tying and untying,
the bending of the heart
to put them on, take them off,
the rush of blood between
the head and feet, my face, sometimes,
if I could see it, astonished.

Other times it's stairs,
three or four at most, "flights"
we call them, as if to mock
the wings we'll never have--
they kill the breath enough
to chill the air, so that I have to
stand there when I get there,

each floor kills the breath
enough to chill the air.
I have to stand there

a witness to myself.

each floor kills the breath
enough to chill the air: I have to
stand there when I get there
like a witness to myself.

Sometimes it's the shoes,
the tying and untying,
the bending of the heart
to put them on, take them off,
the rush of blood, back and forth,
between the head and feet,
my face, sometimes, if I could see it,

astonished. Otherwise,
it's climbing "five flights up,"
as Bishop put it, though
three or four can kill the breath
enough to chill the air
a little brittle blue. Love, too,
is a leveler, a dying all its own.

Where's the ground, really?
We imagine it beneath the floor
and poured concrete--I know
that when I bend to tie my shoes
~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~
I can see the earth, the ancient
cobblestones, and feel
the heat/rising from the sunburned path.

Come the thaw,
I'll wear sandals and cross
against the wind at 5th and 84th,
the way I did the summer
the ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ temperature reached 105 degrees
and whatever taiwan flip-flops
I was wearing melted, ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ Don't walk
~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~
on the grass, ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~
no feet in the water.

Gavity's
invisible

Age, by
addition,
means more
gavity

Cape
sides

Sometimes it's the shoes, the tying and untying,
the bending of the heart to put them on, take them off,
~~then sometimes it's the feet, my mother's feet,~~
the rush of blood, back and forth, between my head and feet,
my face, if I could see it, astonished

Sometimes it's the shoes,
the tying and untying,
the bending of the heart
to put them on, take them off,
the rush of blood, back and forth,
between my head and feet,
my face, if I could see it, astonished.

How the ancients, in their sandals,
covered deserts, trailed through mountains,
or, all day

How the ancients, barefoot in their sandals,
harvested the wheat or trailed

How the ancients, all day,
harvested the wheat or trailed
the Middle East barefoot in sandals

The ancients in their sandals.
That's a thought--nothing
but the real ground under them.
When I bend to tie my shoes
I can see the earth
through the floor and the poured
concrete, I can see, at worst,

the cobblestones. My face
turns red from the heat
rising from the sunburned path.
My mother's Depression feet
from wearing shoes too small--
corns and other things, *the kids James*
vaguely agricultural, *wrong with them?*

*Bible barely mentions shoes,
Maybe there are at least
a hundred references to feet*

Sometimes it's the shoes,
the tying and untying,
the bending of the heart
to put them on, take them off,
the rush of blood between
the head and feet, my face,
sometimes, if I could see it,

astonished. Other times
it's stairs, three or four
at most, "flights" we call them,
as if to mock the wings
we'll never have. The floors
kill the breath enough
to chill the air, so I wait

a moment to catch it back,
Walking, too, slower and at
a shorter range--when I complain,
the doctor says walk faster.
I've never slept, but now
it's even less than ~~that~~ ^{that},
a dark-night-of-the-soul

kind of rising at 3:00 a.m.,
maybe a car starting up,
a cat in heat, the top of
of someone's head under a ~~street~~ light,
nothing to do but think the one
hard thought that is angry
with itself or not angry enough.

If age is about becoming
your own witness, only one
of the two of you has health

Age is about becoming your own
witness

Love, another leveler, a dignity
all its own, she parts left hand
not to be replaced - ~~face to face~~ also time
like ~~ghost~~

Me binding up of shoes,
the climbing stairs, the sleep ~~walks~~
And ~~deeps~~ deep in the park, ~~where the dead~~ all the
shadows ~~who~~ have names printed ~~in debt~~ indelibly in Latin.

silence / in noise

Sometimes it's the shoes, the tying and untying,
 the bending of heart to put them on,
 take them off, the rush of blood
 between the head and feet, my face,
 sometimes, if I could see it,
 in the moment, flushed, as if astonished.
 Other times the stairs, three or four at most,
 "flights" we call them, ~~in order to mock~~ the wings *in honor*
 we'll never have, the fifth floor
 the one to kill the breath and chill the air,
 where the bird in the building flies to first.
 Love, too, a leveler, a dying all its own,
 the parts left behind not to be replaced,
 unspeakable as silence, like rising
 in the night at 3:00 a.m. to watch the snow
 or the dead leaf fall, the rings around the streetlight
 in the rain, and then the rain, the red fist
 of the heart opening and closing almost without me
 When I bend to tie my shoes I can see into the earth,
 the sunburned path on which I pass in sandals, at the end
~~XXXXXX~~ of which, I see, my feet are washed and then anointed,
 and at the end of which, I see, my feet are washed
 and dried ~~XXXXXX~~ *is that my mother's hair* and then anointed.

That long *James*
those *is* *waiting* *for* *the* *dark.*
 When I bend to tie my shoes and the blood fills the cup,
 I can see into the earth and the sunburned path
 on which I pass in sandals and at the end of which
 I can see my feet are washed and softly dried
 with my ~~XXXXXX~~ *mother's* hair, and then anointed.
silk white *they are*

on which I will pass in sandals and at the end of the day
my feet will be washed and softly dried
wiped with my
mother's hair, and then anointed with *spiked*
meadow oils

"Yesterday brought to today so lightly!" *with flowers*

Sometimes it's the shoes,
the tying and untying,
the bending of the heart
just to take them off--

there are ~~seventy-five~~ ^{at least 100} ~~eight~~ ^{hundred}
references to feet in
the King James Bible,
often about the path

"out of the miry clay,"
more often about washing
and anointing; ~~not a word~~
about shoes or even sandals.

My mother's feet were
Depression feet from wearing
shoes too small, Sears
Roebuck or its like,

like a binding of the feet
or walking barefoot in
the desert. Sandpaper
flat, with corns and

other things vaguely
agricultural, and a wobble.
At seventy-four I have
her seventy-eight-year-old

heart, the one she died with.
When I bend over to tie
my shoes it's her feet
trying to fit them,

and failing, which is why
my face, when I lift it,
is heart's-blood red,
the fluid rushing from

the bottom in a reverse
of gravity--or is it because
my head is too far over
looking down at the Depression?

*and once about Ruths
lying at the feet
of Boaz - a sexual
metaphor
"the wife of the dead" - 1/4 line
as the feet of Boaz - 3/4 line
not
and more about death
and renewal in the
book of Ruth*

*A can't tell if it's
whether the blood*

Sometimes it's the shoes, their simple weight,
and then the tying and untying them, the bending
over just to slip them off, and then the socks,
then the ~~sixty-eight~~^{seventy-five} concordance references
in both books of the Bible, such as Psalms 40:2,
"He brought me up...out of the miry clay and set
my feet upon a rock"; or Proverbs 4:26, "Ponder
the path of thy feet"; or Matthew 18:8, "Wherefore
if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off"--

but it ^{isn't} wasn't my hands, it ^{isn't} wasn't even my feet,
it's ~~s~~ shoes and clothes and the hours of the day,
which

Sometimes it's the shoes,
their simple weight,
the tying and untying,
the bending over the heart
just to ~~xxx~~^{take} them off--

there are seventy-five
Biblical references to feet,
commonly about the path
or "out of the miry clay"
to be set upon a rock,

~~but~~
mostly about the washing
and anointing and a lamp unto,
though none directly about shoes
or even sandals, discounting

but mostly about the washing
and anointing and a lamp
unto, though none directly
about shoes or even sandals,
in spite of the fact of

walking ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~^{upright like a god.}
My mother's feet were God-
damned Depression feet