

LATE TO THE KITCHEN

by Emilie Glen

A POET'S PRESS E-CHAPBOOK

FOREWORD

by Brett Rutherford

Like the errant housewife who is gradually achieving liberation as a mermaid, Emilie Glen, too, must be perpetually “late to the kitchen.” Whether bicycling along the sea, or bird-watching in Central Park, or joining a crowd to watch the discovery of a severed head in a Manhattan garbage can, Emilie Glen is perpetually absorbing, sifting, transforming. She slides into a hundred characters and narrates how they react to the natural- -and unnatural —modern world.

Hers is a myriad world whose center is ocean, pianos, cats and birds, as refracted through the eyes of all the characters she has created. Everything filters through into Emilie’s writing. Years of writing and performing, and publication in hundreds and hundreds of magazines, have not dulled her ability to come up with fresh views, new voices.

Her stint as resident muse and actress at an off-off-Broadway theatre (where, as she is prompt to ex-

plain, she was “excused from the nude scenes”) led to a glittering booklet of verismo called *Twat Shot*. A manifesto on behalf of the flightless egg-makers led to another collection called *Up to Us Chickens*. At various times, Emilie has done children’s theater, excelling as the Witch in Hansel and Gretel, and has co-starred in a two-woman lecture/performance about the Bronte sisters. In the 1960s she regaled Greenwich Village audiences with her poetry and piano playing in a flamenco coffee shop.

Now, a new tiara on the Muse’s head, this new effusion of the magical poetry of Emilie Glen.

The words above were written in 1976. Emilie continued for decades longer, running poetry readings in her Greenwich Village apartment where she hosted the worst and the best poets and New York. From as early as 1949, she published a steady stream of poems in magazines all over the world. Every day’s mail brought acceptances and printed journals with her work, and virtually

every day ended with a trip to the post office to mail out new poems. Her virtuosity and generosity were legend.

The poems in this little chapbook were selected by Emilie's daughter Glenda, a folk singer. The book went through several printings up through the 1980s, and then fell from sight. I had lost my last copy of this precious volume, and Russell Ochre was kind enough to loan me a photocopy for scanning. It is a delight to bring this work back into print. For this version I have added Emilie's poem about Emily Bronte.

From a rare tape recording of one of Emilie's readings, we have also produced MP3 files of a number of her poems. See the page at the end of this book for instant links to Emilie reading her work. (If you have a sound card on your computer, or access to an MP3 player, you can listen to these files, save them, and share them.)

I am sure that virtually all these poems were published in magazines, but it is not presently possible to document this — all of Emilie's papers are gone.

HOW THEY COME

See how they come
See how they come
How they come
To the door of poetry
See how they come
To the open reading
One stands at the door
With a motorcycle helmet
Under his arm
A girl plucks her poems
From out her white muff
Paintings under the arm
Poems in his hand
He waits at the door
The four stand their height
Like a basket-ball team
Barefoot she comes
He in muddy boots
Mica dust twinkling his work clothes
They are at the door
With duffle bags rope-tied suitcases

In a wheel-chair on crutches
With a folding bike a bongo drum
 A pet raccoon
Poems typed
 Poems scrawled scratched
 In notebooks portfolios
 Dispatch cases scraps of paper
She stands at the door
 Working her arms out of her snowcoat
Poems between her teeth like a puppy
 See how they come
 See how they come
 How they come
 How they come
 How they come
 Come
Come

DEATH'S HOTEL

Yesterdays rain
Down through the remains
 Dismaling down
Yesterdays ram
 Through the wreckage
 Of yesterdays hotel
The old Broadway Central fallen of age
 Hotel once faceting
Jim Brady's diamonds among prised chandeliers
 Now death's hotel
Hotel of welfare caseloads
 Collapsed under the weight of misery
Ambulances for the dying have sirened off
 New pine boxes for the dead removed
Crane gone fire engines police cars
 No more turret lights spot beams
 Only the street-lamp dark
As the remains wait for whatever
 Is to be done
Rain belated inspector of the walls
 Rain doing the digging

Down to the cluttered pit of death
Yesterday's rain in a variety of strums
Gurgling burpling cascading
Drip drip dripping
Down wrecked stories
Allegro adagio
Raindrop postlude
Through bricks and plaster and rotting wood
Wet earth the smell of a thousand
Decaying mushrooms
Yesterday's rain
Down the tottering cornices
No exit exit signs
Banging doors upended floors
Crutches furniture beat icebox
Cracked mirrors
Rain in final statament

SO I

And so I opened
My apartment door
To the ringing of bells
Bolted myself in
And said Merry Christmas
To the cats

MAN

No man
Is
An island
Is
An island
Is
Man

BERRY BRIGHTS

Where there's a berry
There's a way
Where there's a way
There's a berry
Where there are birds
There are berries
Berry-eyed birds at the berries
Greener the berry farther the bird
Berries in the cream light
Berries in the bowl
Berries too bright for the fresh-carved grave-stone
Berries startling the bay walk
Berries in a basket
Berries in a box
Which came first the berry or the mouth
A berry a berry popberries of the sea
Bacchus berries flying the birds upside down
Berry down dizzy
Up down dizzy
Down dizzy

PAINTED OUT

Painted out,
The woman who died in the night,
Painted out as if she had never been,
Sun-cream paint glistening on the first
floor front
Door hanging open,
She would be sitting in the lamplight,
Cat furring the sill,
When I climbed the brownstone steps,
Long shadows into velour depths,
Mysteries of the mantelpiece,
Mirror blue glinting,
Castle candle in brown-red glow

Sun-cream paint,
And the door hanging open,
The place small empty
Now she is painted out,
The clear-browed woman,
Hair in sober coif,
Painted out in a glister of sun-cream,
Her belongings a pile of trash
Under her once window,
Painted out as if she had never been

ISADORA HAD IT FIGURED

I F Isadora
I can
Dance
To her eugenics
Choose great Fathers
One per child
First born must be musical
Fathered by Leonard Bernstein or Julian Bream.

Not being Isadora
I must mate with a dancer
To achieve a dancer
Nureyev
If he would be willing to function
Edwin Way Teal the naturalist
How old is he anyway
Physicist no thank you
Statesman
Are there any

Lindsay for looks
I must have Lindsay
No matter what he produces

Actor
I might sample more than one
Pinter the playwright
He's around isn't he
Louis Nizer Nader Udall Fellini Yevtushenko

Financier
My young will need one
Not Howard Hughes nor Hugh Heffner
This requires more research
I'd like a go at Billy Graham
Return engagement whenever the results warrant
One muscle boy
I'll have to bone up on sports
Toothsome as I am
Who says they'll all say Yes
A wife or so might object
I must have a secondary tertiary list at least
Maybe I should just marry Marty

LATE TO THE KITCHEN

My husband purples
When I'm late preparing his dinner,
Each night I'm at the stove later,
He fears I have an afternoon lover,
A lover is not what I have,
But love,
A love powerful of voice,
A love from the beginning of globe time,
A zillionaire handsome beyond men;
The sea is my love,
Its rhythming waves,
Tugging tossing seething rocking,
Waters sec waters mellow
Satin ribbon waters sparklers

I am late to the kitchen
For swimming the glory sea,
And I'm learning how to stay under longer
Without a snorkel,
The air spaces are there for my finding,
And I'm developing my rudimentary gills:

Each day I swim out farther,
Come to the kitchen later,
The sea wants me,
I swim across the continental shelf
To a drop so deep
I have yet to pressure
Two miles down to the night of the sea floor,
The globigerina ooze of diatoms and radiolarian,
And the dust of shooting stars:
I am discovering mountains and valleys,
Sea meadows blooming with lillies and anemones,
Sea palms sea grasses,
Whenever I like I can go down
Into the dark red belly of a whale:
Fierce fish pass me by,
I'm not their food and they're not mine,
I hear the sea creatures,
And they seem to note my bubbling voice:
Plankton always plankton,
I nibble on diatoms and sea lettuce,
Nothing needs cooking in the sea

My husband complains I taste like a salt stick;
 Am cold to the touch;
 Smell like a fish market:
Track kelp and seaweed around the kitchen,
 And scatter sand in the bed:
He still suspects I have a beachboy lover
 When I'm building a blue pearl grotto
 Out among the anemones:
When I'm beginning to pressure down
 To the neoned night
Of fish with lighted portholes like ships,
 Fish carrying lanterns on their heads:

When I swim to the sun-green upper waters
 To fly with the flying fish,
 Ride the backs of dolphins,
I snap the hooks of fishermen,
 Rip their nets,
 Bend harpoons and marlin spikes:

Mermaid that I now am
 I surface to a rock island,
My sea-green hair about my breasts,
 A rainbow sea pearl hanging from my forehead
 By a strand of kelp;
My sea collar is crimsoned with algae:
 I confound sailors as I sit
 Waving a sea fan:
My husband may come upon me one day,
 And be troubled by the resemblance
To a wife who came late to the kitchen,
 As I slide off the rock
 Into the sea

ROAST SWAN

What do you drink
 With roast swan?
What wines while you cut meat
 From the bones
 Of the tall white glider of waters?
White wine? Red?
 One of the rosés
For feathers roseate with sunset?
 Do you dine to the wine tones
 Of *Swan Lake*?
What do you drink with roast swan?
 Why not roast the wine
And let the swan fly free?

LOST

The lost Atlantis
 May not be lost
 Down there
We may be lost
 Up here

SHAPE OF A GRAND

World a grand
Lid lifted
Triangled
Dark polished
Shaking off the globe
In its mahogany thrust to the skies
Pedals deep into the earth of resonance
Mighty pianoforte
Alpine keys to an Everest of tone
Black forest of sharps and flats
Grand great grand
For my tone-tipped fingers
Grand in the wind of hurricane
Pianissimo of rain-drops on birch leaves
Rack for world music
Earth the great shape of a grand piano

WHICH CAME FIRST

Which came first
My little son has found a way
Out of his high crib
Came first
Found how to open the icebox door
Which
Pressed me awake with an egg in my hand
Came first
Left a buttercup meadow of broken eggs
Behind his running
To wake me with an egg
Unbroken.

BOBBING BENEATH

Pumpkin heads
Bobbing beneath me
My head up here brook clear
Their tops in candle flame
Smell of the scorched flesh of pumpkins
If I am not careful I'll be singed
Which means I must beat off the pumpkin heads
Send them rolling down the hill
So I can breathe up here

STRING

String hanging from a hole in the plaster
String a little dirty
Plaster white as
I pull at the string
Which pulls down long long
Longer
A big ball's worth a kite's worth
Hole black through
To the other side
I knock at the door next mine
A woman answers
Says *I don't know what you mean*
There is no hole in my wall
I keep pulling pulling pulling
And there is no end to it
The string

HIS INDOOR WIFE

HER husband returns to her
Now she is dead,
Her true lover husband,
True love of sea,
Comes to a wife no closer
To his sea
Than the salt in her cooking water,
Returns ordering cremation
With burial at sea,
The seaman's service,
He scatters her ashes
Upon the salt-sea waters
Making her his own

BAY WALK

CAN it still be there
The bay walk?
How can it still be there
Now I've left/
Snowy egrets across the browning marshes,
The bay sparkling about the ducks,
Speckle-berry branches of russian olive
Bending low over my head,
Gold-crowned kinglets among the pines
Cedar waxwings in the cedars,
Rose-hips and beach rose all on one bush;
I smelled a camphor flower,
Mock orange and Mexican tea,
If I don't hear it see it smell it taste it,
Can the bay walk be there?
Not possibly
Now I've left

TIPPED

ORANGE cat on my back
Wakes me to a fragrance
Not particularly cat
Why his whiskers are tipped orange pink
He has grown rosebuds in the night
If my cat can
I can
Grow rosebuds at hair tip
In the dream state I suppose
It will take delicate vibrations
Between me and cosmos
For me to waken with rosebuds
Then my cat and I will sit around
On cushions
Much sought after
For our rosebud tips

EMILY

EMILY
Of the moors
I am Emilie,
You are Emily,
I walk the shore
And my steps are yours.
We walk into the blue violet distance,
You across purple heather,
I across golden sands,
Yours the moor winds,
Mine the sea winds.
I am of the world
But not of the world,
Your are not of the world
But of the world.
I who lost my brother when I was six,
Lost him by drowning,
Yet I walk the sea,

Wonder how it was with you and your brother
 Across moors wilder
 Than the sea I walk.
In the waves I hear many voices,
 Hear his,
In the moor winds you hear one voice.
As long as I walk,
 You walk,
Walk heather to the sea

HEAR EMILIE GLEN READ

The following poems are now on our website as MP3 files. If your computer is equipped to play media files, click on the link to play them. You may also save the MP3 files for playing on an MP3 player.

Late to the Kitchen

Cato's Midnight

Portrait

Putrescence

Up to Us Chickens

Piano Poems

THE POET'S PRESS

66 HOPE STREET #2

PROVIDENCE, RI 02906