

A LOVER'S QUARREL

for Voice and Piano

**Poems by
SAM HAMILL**

**Music by
BRUCE TRINKLEY**

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COMPOSER'S NOTE

A LOVER'S QUARREL was composed during a residency at Centrum at Fort Worden State Park in Port Townsend, Washington, in May and June, 2007. The composer first encountered the poetry of Sam Hamill at Memory's Vault, on Artillery Hill at Fort Worden State Park.

Memory's Vault, which overlooks the confluence of the Strait of Juan de Fuca and Puget Sound, is a striking and powerful assemblage of architectural elements and steles created by Richard Turner in 1988. The texts of "Sonnet" and "A Lover's Quarrel" are inscribed on two of the steles of Memory's Vault. At the entrance to the site, architect/sculptor Richard Turner provides the following note: "Memory's Vault is a work of art created through the efforts of the artist, individuals and state agencies working collectively to mark in a new way an important page in Washington's history."

Sam Hamill's poems celebrate life in the Pacific Northwest, the forests, the flowers, and especially the seashore.

Kah Tai is the Native American name of a lovely small land-locked lagoon in Port Townsend, adjacent to Admiralty Inlet. It is surrounded by marshes and abundant vegetation.

The cycle is dedicated to Norman Spivey with gratitude and affection.

Kah Tai Purgatorio

I could carry a little boat out
through sandy hillock and marsh grass
and slip it into the water and slide
over that bluegreen glass in silence.

I could cruise the waterways of winds
around this small lagoon where
terns nestle into shadows and herons wade.
I could, I could.

I want, like this little body of water,
to let my body reflect the stars and moons
of midnight. I want to lie that still.
I've seen this water calm as a dreamy boy.

But then I'd have to, sooner or later,
return. And doing so, I'd have to choose.
And any bank I chose
would be the world.

Sonnet

Often I return to the half-
hidden bower beside the sea
as though the sea were a woman
and I
her occasional man.

From the hill unwinding to her shore,
I watch her languid dance unfold:
blue riffs of power, blue swirls
riding forward in her channel.

And the man I think I am comes down
to muse near dark-shadowed pools
in the bower of the woman the sea is -

she, the forever faithful,
in whose dark eyes
the reflection of self,
mercifully, is lost forever.

Song for Tulips

Little flower cupping rain,
you are early this year
and my friend who planted you
is not here. Little gate
of pleasure dew with arms
upraised to the rain,
little red-lipped queen
or king of nothing but the rain,
detain your smile until
the hands that planted you
come home again. And then
smile wetly in the rain,
lips parted, through which
heaven's gate is seen.

A Lover's Quarrel

There are some to whom a place means nothing,
for whom the lazy zeroes
a goshawk carves across the sky
are nothing,
for whom a home is something one can buy.
I have long wanted to say,
just once before I die,
I am home.

When I remember the sound of my true country,
I hear winds
high up in the evergreens, the soft snore
of surf, far off, on a wintry day,
the half-garbled song of finches
darting off through alder
on a summer day.

Lust does not
fatigue the soul, I say. This wind,
these ever-
green trees, this little bird of the spirit -
this is the shape, the place of my desire. I'm free
as a fish or a stone.

* * *

Don't tell me
about the seasons in the East,
don't talk to me
about eternal California summer.
It's enough to have
a few days naked
among three hundred kinds of rain.

In its little plastic pot on the high sill,
the African violet
grows away from the place
the sun last was, its fuzzy leaves
leaning out in little curtsies.

It, too, has had enough
of the sun. I love the sound of a storm
without thunder, the way winds
slow, trees darken, heavy clouds
rumbling so softly
you must close your eyes to listen:

then the *blotch, blotch*
of big drops
plunketing through the leaves.

It is difficult,
this being a stranger on earth.
Why, I've seen pilgrims come
and tear away at blackberry vines
with ev'rything that's in them, I've seen them
heap their anger
up against a tree
and curse these swollen skies.

What's this? - a mountain beaver
no bigger than a newborn mouse
curled in my palm,
an osprey curling over tide pools and lifting
toward the trees, a wind at dusk
hollow in the hollows of the eaves,
a wind over waves
cooling sand crabs washed up along the beach.

Each thing, closely seen,
appears more strange
than before: the shape of my desire
is huge, vague,
full of many things
commingling -

dying bees among the dying flowers;
winter rain and the smoke it brings.

If it fills me with longing,
it is only because we are wind and smoke,
flower and bee;
it is only because
we are like the rain, falling,
falling through our own most secret being,
through a world of not-knowing.

At the end of the day,
I come, finally,
to myself, I return to the strange sounds of a man
who wants to speak
with stones, with the hard crust of earth.
But nothing listens.

When the sea hammers the sea wall,
I'm dumb.
When the nighthawks bleat at dusk, I'm drunk
on the sadness of their songs.
When the moon is so close
you can almost reach it through the trees,
I'm frozen, I'm blind,
or I'm gone.

Fish, bird, stone, there's something
I can't know, but know the same:
I hear the rain inside me
only to look up
into a bitter sun.

What do we listen to, what do we think
we hear? The sound
of sea walls crumbling,
a little bird with hunger in its song:
You should have known! You should have known!

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about the seasons in the East,
don't talk to me
about eternal California summer.
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I can't know, but know the same:
I hear the rain inside me
only to look up
into a bitter sun.

What do we listen to, what do we think
we hear? The sound
of sea walls crumbling,
a little bird with hunger in its song:
You should have known! You should have known!

Like any Nootka rose,
I know there are some
for whom a place is nothing.
like the wild rose,
like the tide and the day,
we come, go, or stay
according to a whim.

It is enough, perhaps,
to say, *We live here*.
And let it go at that.

This wind lets go
of everything it touches.
I long to hold the wind.

I'd kiss a fish
and love a stone
and marry the winter's rain

if I could persuade this battered earth
to let me make it home.

1. Kah Tai Purgatorio

Sam Hamill

Bruce Trinkley

from *Almost Paradise* (2005)

Largo pensoso ♩ = 44 *mp* ³

Voice

I could car-ry a lit-tle boat out—

Piano

mp *sonore*

con pedale

through sand - y hill - ock and marsh grass— and slip it in - to the

5

wa - ter— and slide o - ver that blue - green glass in si - lence.—

9

Piu mosso ♩ = 56*mp*

I could cruise the wa-ter-ways of

14

*mf**mp*

winds a-round this small la-go-on where terns nes-tle in-to

17

*p***Meno mosso** ♩ = 48*mf**f**mp*

shad - ows and her - ons wade. I could, I could. I

21

*cresc.**mf*

want, like this lit - tle bod - y of wa - ter, to let my bod - y re - flect the

27

p *cresc.*

stars and moons of mid - night. I want to lie that

32

f *dim.* *p*

Piu mosso ♩ = 56

38 still. I've seen this wa - ter calm — as a dream - y boy. —

3 *dim.*

43 — But then I'd have to, soon - er or lat - er, —

mp *cresc. poco a poco* 3

cresc. poco a poco

mf *cresc.* *ff* 5

re - turn.

48 *f* *ff*

p *sempre*

52 And do-ing so, I'd have to choose. And an - y

56 bank I chose would be the world.

60 *non ritardando al fine*

2. Sonnet

Sam Hamill

Bruce Trinkley

from *Memory's Vault* (1988)

Andante con moto ♩ = 112 *mp*

Voice

Piano

p

Of - ten I re - turn to the

half - hid-den bow - er be - side the sea as though the sea were a

4

poco cresc. *mf*

wom - an and I her oc-ca - sion-al man. From the hill un - wind-ing to her

8

poco cresc. *mf*

[illegible]

16 pow - er, blue swirls rid - ing for-ward in her chan - nel.

mp *poco rit.*

p *poco rit.*

a tempo

And the man I think I am comes down to

a tempo

mp *p*

23

muse near dark - shad-owed pools in the bow-er of the wom - an the sea is,

she, the for - ev - er faith - ful, in whose dark eyes

27 *mf* *dim.* *pp*

the re - flec - tion of self,

30

mer - ci - ful - ly, is lost for -

34 *pochiss. rit.* *pochiss. rit.*

ev - er.

37 *a tempo* *lunga*

3. Song for Tulips

9

Sam Hamill

Bruce Trinkley

from *The Calling Across Forever* (1976)

Andante calmato ♩ = 132 *p*

Voice

Piano

mp *p* *con pedale*

Lit - tle

flow - er cup - ping rain, you are ear - ly this year

6

poco cresc. *mf*

and my friend who plant - ed you is

12

poco cresc. *mp*

not here. Lit - tle gate of

[17]

mp

dim.

p

pleas - ure dew with arms up - raised to the

[22]

cresc.

cresc.

rain, lit - tle red - lipped queen or

[27]

mf

poco rit.

a tempo

mp

cresc. poco a poco

mf

poco rit.

a tempo

mp

cresc. poco a poco

king of noth - ing but the rain, de - tain your

32

f *mf*

smile un - til the hands that plant - ed you

37

cresc.

come home a - gain. And then

42

ff *dim.* *mp poco allarg.*

f *dim.* *mp* *poco allarg.*

*a tempo**p*

smile wet - ly in the rain, _____

47 *a tempo*

p

lips part - ed, _____ through which heav - en's

52 *a tempo*

pochiss. rit.

cresc.

pochiss. rit.

cresc.

pp.

gate is seen. _____

57 *mf*

mp cresc.

rit.

8va - - - - -

61 *rit.*

f

4. A Lover's Quarrel

13

Sam Hamill

Bruce Trinkley

from *The Nootka Rose* (1987)

Voice **Moderato** ♩ = 126 *mp* with great conviction

There are some to whom a

Piano *f* *decresc.* *p*

place means noth - ing, for whom the laz - y ze - roes a gos - hawk carves a -

8 cross the sky are noth - ing, — for whom a home is some-thing one can buy.

12 *mf* joyously *cresc.* *f*

I have long want-ed to say, just once be - fore I die,

mf *mp* *cresc.* *f*

mp molto cresc.

with abandon

f

I

am

home.

16

*mf**p* molto cresc.*f**mp*

When I re-mem - ber the sound of my true coun - try,

20

p

I hear winds high up in the ev - er - greens, the

24

pp una corda

soft snore of surf, far off, on a win - try day, the

28

poco rit.

half - garbled song of finch - es ——— dart - ing off through al - der ——— on a sum - mer day.

32

poco rit.

Poco meno mosso ♩ = 104

*mp molto espressivo**mf*

Lust does not fa - tigue the soul, I say. This wind, these ev - er-green trees,

37

p colla voce

mp

this lit - tle bird of the spir - it, *cantando* this is the shape, the

42

mp

p quietly

p

pp

p

place of my de - sire. ——— I'm free as a fish ——— or a stone.

47

Allegro moderato $\text{♩} = 120$

mf

Don't tell me a - bout the sea-sons in the East, don't talk to me a-bout e -

mp poco marcato

cresc.

ter - nal Cal - i - for - nia sum-mer. It's e-nough to have a few days na - ked a -

f *mp*

mong three hun-dred kinds of rain. In its lit-tle plas-tic pot on the high sill, the

mf *p*

Af-ri-can vi - o - let grows a-way from the place the sun last was, its fuzz - y leaves lean-ing out in

53

57

60

64

lit - tle curt - sies. It, too, has had e - nough of the sun.

I love the sound of a storm with-out thun - der, the way winds slow, trees dark - en,

heav - y clouds rum - bling so soft - ly you must close your eyes to lis - ten:

then the blotch, blotch of big drops plun-ket - ing through the

mf *f marcato*

mp *mf marcato*

con pedale *sub. p* *senza pedale*

sub. p *con pedale* *pp*

leaves. It is dif - fi-cult, this be - ing a stran - ger on earth. Why, I've seen

85

mp *f*

mp

with anger pil - grims come and tear a-way at black - ber-ry vines with ev'-ry-thing that's in them, I've seen them

88

mf *ff* *f* *dim.*

heap their an - ger up a - gainst a tree and curse these swol - len

92

mf *mf dim. molto ritard.* *molto ritard.*

Andante grazioso ♩ = 108

skies. What's this? a moun - tain

95

mp *p*

poco rit. *a tempo*

bea - ver no big - ger than a new - born mouse curled in my palm, an os-prey

100

poco rit. *a tempo*

poco rit.

curl - ing o-ver tide pools and lift - ing toward the trees, a wind at dusk ———

105

poco rit. *cantando* *mp*

a tempo *mf* *pochiss. rit.* *mp* *a tempo*

hol - low in the hol - lows of the eaves, a wind o - ver

111

a tempo *pochiss. rit.* *a tempo* *pp*

poco rit.

waves cool - ing sand crabs washed up a - long the

116

poco rit.

Allegro moderato ♩ = 120*mp*

121 beach. _____ Each thing, close - ly seen, ap -

p

125 pears more strange than be - fore: the shape of my de -

129 sire is huge, vague, full of man - y things com -

mf *mp poco allarg.*

cresc. *mf* *mp*

poco allarg.

Quasi recitativo*p espressivo*

134 ming - ling, dy - ing bees a - mong the dy - ing flow - ers; win - ter rain and the

p colla voce

Largo $\text{♩} = 48$

138 smoke it brings. *p* If it fills me with long - ing, it is *mp espressivo* *pp*

142 on - ly be-cause we are wind and smoke, — flow-er and bee; it is *mp*

146 on - ly be-cause we are like the rain, fall - ing, fall - ing — through our own most se - cret *cresc.* *f* *dim.* *pochiss. rit.* *a tempo mp*

be - ing, — through a world of not - know - ing. *pochiss. rit.* *a tempo p*

150

Allegro moderato ♩ = 120*mp**poco cresc.*

154 At the end of the day, I come, fi-nal-ly, to my -

158 self, I re - turn to the strange sounds of a man who wants to speak with

161 stones, with the hard crust of earth. But noth - ing

165 lis - tens.

Adagio $\text{♩} = 72$

23

mp legato

169 When the sea ham-mers the sea wall, — I'm dumb. When the

mp

cresc. *mf* *mp* *rit.* *p espr.*

173 night-hawks bleat at dusk, I'm drunk — on the sad-ness of their songs. When the

dim.

mp *mf*

178 moon is so close you can al-most reach it through the trees, — I'm fro-zen, I'm

pp *mp*

mf *mp*

182 blind, or I'm gone. — Fish, bird, stone, — there's some-thing I can't

mf *p*

187 *allargando* *p* *a tempo*

know, — but know — the same: — I hear the rain in - side me — on - ly — to

193 *a tempo* *pp*

look up — in - to a bit - ter sun. — What do we lis - ten to, —

198 *molto espressivo*

what do we think we hear? — The sound of sea walls crum - bling, — a lit - tle bird with

203 *f* *mf*

hun - ger in its song: You should have known! You should have known!

Largo espressivo

♩ = 52

25

mp

Like an - y

mf

p

Noot - ka rose, I know there are some for whom a place is noth - ing.

poco cresc.

mf dim.

mp

like the wild rose, like the tide and the day, we

mp dim.

p

come, go, or stay ac - cord - ing to a whim.

228 *f* *mp*

It is e - nough, per-haps, to say, We live here. And

mf *sonore*

232 *mf* *dim. poco a poco*

let it go at that. This wind lets go of

p *mp*

236 *p* *quiet, intense*

ev - 'ry - thing it touch - es. I long to hold the

dim. poco a poco *pp*

pp molto espressivo

wind. I'd kiss a fish and love a

240

stone and mar - ry the win - ter's rain if

244

f *mp*

mf *f*

p

248 I could per - suade this bat - tered earth to let me make it

mp dim. poco a poco al fine

home.

252

pp