

1974

Notes / at a Wedding

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NOTES / AT A WEDDING

The grass says, "don't touch"
The only shade is in the churchyard;
We can't sit there.

My stomach reverberates, against its will,
To the sound of church music: hollow, hateful
No smiles today.

Inside, they are taking vows of silence.

Alf has rented an air-conditioned car
He read somewhere that spuds, ducks, corn,
Cabbage, tomatoes and such
Are on the way out, and graciously shares this information
With us.

Alf's wife Helen is a cool woman;
Three children.
She seems to have stopped talking, trying to.
The vital signs.

We speed by a potato field, where dust
Hangs in the air. A dry, warm day.
A blessing.

Two mouthfuls of beef in a dying land,
A glass of champagne.
Poor body, the meat tastes like what it is
And money is indigestible.

The priest was young, eager to please.
If he had just got on with it,
In a language I didn't understand . . .

You wanted to be foolish;
Everyone did. You wanted to be
So drunk.
"I'm no good," I hear you say.
"Life is hard." Delusion.

Children mimic the grownups
Chasing each other, sloppily.

Act as if you are good, that is all.

A mouthful of grass, an inverted scream
My stranger and companion,
The assorted pastel company, a parboiled
Bride and Groom.

We drink from the cup of the venom of shame,
The priest wipes it clean.
Nothing sentimental is true.

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

from: The White Slavery of Words

The people hide nothing
Yet they want to believe: nothing bad, nothing bad.
The people express everything,
Yet the language grows away from them
Hardens around a television set, a bitter
Cold kitchen, screaming kids