

The laurel tree. [Santa Barbara, Calif.] Unicorn Press, 1967.

THE LAUREL TREE □

Nathaniel Tarn □

Streamed in her thirty-third year as i surmise this girl of rivers uncertain whether back or forward to
flow the present difficult poured where the two seas fight shy of mingling thrust through the midst of
them and parted them and rose clothed in no clothes and without ornament onto the beach of this
lemon country

turtle as ageless as her sorrow stones lays amber from her eyes as her eggs fall turns to inhale the
sea so she believes but follows death inland melts in her carapace

ironed to wafers by the sky this is the sand-pan greased with oil the only dent in mile on mile of
beach into which she fitted the shape of her beautiful years we outswated the sun on that day and
nearly drowned each other doing nothing beyond that to spice love

tarantula lies with a stake through her loins her legs curl like the planets round the sun she slowly
sails the day as if at ease her eggs meanwhile as bloodshot as the salmon's although unnatural

she washed the foam from her hair in the whipping waters fulfilled her needs invisibly in the sea
stood up in a surf of salt-bleached dolls came over to brood me where i lay in the thyme the bees in
her breasts wove the thrashing gorse her down her mandorla of light

a messenger yes/no a semaphore her black/white keys her in/out whirl of morse hoopoe signals
salvation deviously closed are the doors of death by thy donations in the bowl of her wings she
awaits our alms

since when i have looked for her as far as the earth is pleased to turn to make the ships glide by as
if they did not move with wings at their funnels and resounding names since when i have brushed
every inch of the earth with sunlight to etch her out of her landscape who had fled from me turning
to fibre behind her navel my hot seed

suffering servants now are black and smell and do not smile they do not remain human very long
when looked at their childrens' chins are smelted to their chests even a mother is at pains to love

she is turning to wood in my arms at the knot in her knees the branches in her thighs the boughs
from breasts to armpits she is turning to wood in the hot furrow of her belly where it curves to meet
the crease in her spine she is turning to wood between her lips she cannot talk she is turning to
wood along her fingers they will bear leaves

children unborn dream of lemons flies suck the furrows in their faces parched skin cracks on certain
sections the skin turns inside out garbage in newspapers

as for the gathering in of her desires as for her age should no one even look at us in the streets any
more as we pass it is a long time none the less since we have been alone in joy or since there has
been a possibility of anything in our lives but joy and yet though grateful for each other's coincidence
at this time we are happiness-blind

a year has died since that blue sky since the wound in her fur hung with pearls a sparrow nestles in
the crook of a branch we do not see the burning flesh behind it it is essence of bird essence of love

grow to wood lose your silks develop habits but do not leave this servant who would lie and drift by
you his worthless life i call her gaze to prolong the branches shape to the wind if there be any wind
where we have been wake oh my suffering hands upon your suffering hands let them fall with the
leper's thumb into the bowl out of our means