A Mythology Reflects Its Region

A mythology reflects its region. Here
In Connecticut, we never lived in a time
When mythology was possible—But if we had—
That raises the question of the image's truth.
The image must be of the nature of its creator.
It is the nature of its creator increased,
Heightened. It is he, anew, in a freshened youth
And it is he in the substance of his region,
Wood of his forests and stone out of his fields
Or from under his mountains.

When one of them moved through the center of Selefkia
just as it was getting dark—
moved like a young man, tall, extremely handsome,
the joy of being immortal in his eyes,
his hair black and perfumed—
the people going by would gaze at him,
and one would ask the other if he knew him,
if he was a Greek from Syria, or a stranger.
But some who looked more carefully
would understand and step aside;
and as he disappeared under the arcades,
among the shadows and the evening lights,
going toward the quarter that lives
only at night, with orgies and debauchery,
with every kind of intoxication and desire,
they would wonder which of Them it could be,
and for what suspicious pleasure
he'd come down into the streets of Selefkia
from the August Celestial Mansions.
All that Greek manure under the green bananas,
under the indigo hills, the rain-rutted road,
the galvanized village, the myth of rustic manners,
glazed by the transparent page of what I had read.
What I had read and rewritten till literature
was guilty as History. When would the sails drop
from my eyes, when would I not hear the Trojan War
in two fishermen cursing in Ma Kelman's shop?
When would my head shake off its echoes like a horse
shaking off a wreath of flies? When would it stop,
the echo in the throat, insisting, "Omeros";
when would I enter that light beyond metaphor?

But it was mine to make what I wanted of it, or
what I thought was wanted. A cool wood off the road,
a hut closed like a wound, and the sound of a river
coming through the trees on a country Saturday,
with no one in the dry front yard, the still leaves,
the yard, the shade of a breadfruit tree on the door,
then the track from which a man's figure emerges,
then a girl carrying laundry, the road-smell like loaves,
the yellow-dressed butterflies in the grass marges.

HOMER'S TONGUE

Had I Homer's tongue I could record
For other men, less fortunate,
The sudden sight of her one day
Walking alone across the level land,
Striding like Pallas Athene
Against the walls of Troy.

ELEGY

Sappho says that even the son
Of Peleus sleeps in the dark earth,
Quiet at last; but I say
That fierce heart still beats,
Even in death unsatisfied,
Unappeased.