

## Revolving Days

By David Malouf.

That year I had nowhere to go, I fell in love — a mistake of course, but it lasted and has lasted.  
The old tug at the heart, the grace unasked for, urgencies that boom under the pocket of a shirt. What I remember is the colour of the shirts. I'd bought them as an experiment in ways of seeing myself, hoping to catch in a window as I passed what I was to be in my new life as lover: one mint green, one pink, the third, called Ivy League, tan with darker stripes, my first button-down collar.

We never write. But sometimes, knotting my tie at a mirror, one of those selves I had expected steps into the room. In the next room you are waiting (we have not yet taken back the life we promised to pour into each other's mouths forever and for ever) while I choose between changes to surprise you.  
Revolving days. My heart in my mouth again, I'm writing this for you, wherever you are, whoever is staring into your blue eyes. It is me, I'm still here. No, don't worry, I won't appear out of that old time to discomfort you. And no, at this distance, I'm not holding my breath for a reply.

### Summary and analysis of the poem:

#### "Revolving Days"

In this poem, the speaker reflects on a time in his past when he fell in love. He calls it a "mistake / of course," but it seems as though the

feeling has stayed with him nonetheless. He recalls the feelings he felt but also the colors of the shirts he purchased then, for his new life as a lover. He and his lover do not stay in touch. However, sometimes he feels like he tried to feel then, like one of the new selves in the new shirts, and he feels as though he is right back there in the relationship again. The time passes and days go by, but the speaker still feels that his "heart / [is] in [his] mouth again." His feelings remained unchanged, then, and he considers who she might be involved with now. In the end, however, he assures her that he will not reappear in her life and doesn't mean to cause her any discomfort; he expects nothing from her and does not expect to hear from her.

"Revolving Days" uses apostrophe and symbolism to convey the idea that moving on from lost love can be incredibly difficult and even impossible. **Apostrophe** is when the speaker addresses someone absent or dead as though they were there and could respond. Here, the poet's use of apostrophe helps to convey the speaker's sense of longing, of yearning, for the lover who has left him. Further, the color of the shirts he purchased during this relationship—"mint green, one / pink, the third, called Ivy League, tan / with darker stripes . . ."—seem to **symbolize** the new life he hoped he'd have as a lover. They are bright and clean and new, probably starched and crisp, one his "first button-down collar." The colorful brightness of those shirts, as well as the "blue eyes" of his lost love, are the only colors in the poem. Life seems as though it is, perhaps, figuratively colorless now for him. Symbolically, then, life is duller, less exciting, in the wake of this love.

David Malouf's poem "Revolving Days" is the title poem for one of his numerous books of poetry. In the poem, he is drawn back in time by the memories of a past love. Although he says that falling in love was a mistake, the love has endured within him. He seems to transcend time when he catches a glimpse of himself in the mirror. He feels like his love is in the other room and he is deciding which self he is going to present. He remembers three shirts he purchased during that time period which represent the changes that he was making in himself. He was experimenting with his identity.

In reality, time has passed; his lover is far away. This semblance of moving in and out of reality is reflected in the title, "Revolving Days." In

the end, Malouf's words reassure his past love that although the memories have conjured up physical emotions, there will be no intrusion into present life. He does not expect anything in return, he says. "And no, at this distance, I'm not holding my breath for a reply."

### SMALL TOWNS AND THE RIVER

BY MAMANG DAI.

Small towns always remind me of death.  
My hometown lies calmly amidst the trees,  
it is always the same,  
in summer or winter,  
with the dust flying,  
or the wind howling down the gorge.

Just the other day someone died.  
In the dreadful silence we wept  
looking at the sad wreath of tuberose.  
Life and death, life and death,  
only the rituals are permanent.

The river has a soul.  
In the summer it cuts through the land  
like a torrent of grief. Sometimes,  
sometimes, I think it holds its breath  
seeking a land of fish and stars

The river has a soul.  
It knows, stretching past the town,  
from the first drop of rain to dry earth  
and mist on the mountaintops,  
the river knows  
the immortality of water.

A shrine of happy pictures

marks the days of childhood.  
Small towns grow with anxiety  
for the future.  
The dead are placed pointing west.  
When the soul rises  
it will walk into the golden east,  
into the house of the sun.

In the cool bamboo,  
restored in sunlight,  
life matters, like this.

In small towns by the river  
we all want to walk with the gods.