

BRIDGES

And now, Sweden,
having given me a patch, upon which to plant;
and a plot, upon which to build,
a new bud upon the old,
a lease of life,
putting to shame, the penalty of death
to which, unheard,
I was sentenced;
from pylons unto parapets, I will build bridges,
scanning hazy peaks, over seven seas.

And they shall be
of rock and stone, of steel and iron
draped in lace and gold;
and they will take me
to lands I've never been, and to hearts I've never felt.

I hear the soft steps of the children on the sand
and the silence of the early morn' ...
and the majesty of the setting sun.
In the power of the car engine,
and the coo of the white dove and the grey pigeon,
I hear the distant echoes of the African lovesong
and the anthems of freedom.

So too,
do the whistle of the waterbirds on the riverbanks,
and the fragrance of the lily on the pond
all beckon to me.
And I know that I will, in turn and in time
watch a little seed, to a restful branch grow,
yielding others, bountiful in life,
and more in beauty;
from the parapet of the bridge
that I will build
over seven seas.

Catherine A. Odora, 11th April 1988, in Stockholm, Sweden