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## HANDLING SIN

There is a delay  
a cortico-thalamic gap  
in which the sin  
seems to dissolve—  
a no-man's-land  
and then the fun begins,  
  
the guilt, the grieving,  
and grief is the island word for  
being conscious at all,  
but the pause  
between the sin  
and consciousness of guilt  
is our green paradise,  
breathless, on the high moor  
a moment, and far  
across the sea the coast of France.

2.

I'll tell you how it is with me—  
after the thing is done  
there is a quiet time.  
That's what I'm going on about here,  
the empty hour while the soul

**down below (that's where it lives)  
takes stock of what's been going on.  
Meantime light-headed, almost happy,  
but not too confident in this felicity  
the sinner idles on the common path.**

**3**

**There are no confessional boxes in that church.  
Just sandbags piled on sandbags  
full of guilt, remorse, bewilderment  
piled high against the hurricane to come.  
The brain. Strange bastion. But of what?**

**13 April 2013**

=====

**Out of breath or out of meat,  
wheat, will, sympathy or luck  
but never words, the long mercy  
of a narrow lawn, a *morgen*  
some old tongues call it,  
a little more than half an acre,  
green after two days rain, a morning.**

**13 April 2013**

=====

**Plummy details of the academic life  
Cleopatra rolled up in a carpet  
movies no one ever gets to see again  
and Spenser's *Faerie Queene* I read  
all one afternoon like a teenage boy  
on a skateboard grinding the sidewalk away.**

**13 April 2013**

## AMONG THE BASSOON

*for David Adam Nagy*

*Flügel*, grand piano  
piano with a wing  
uplifted,  
          shadow of the raised top  
on the conservatory wall—  
*gnomon of the sundial*  
cast by the low-slung light  
*dramatic lighting*  
                          and the bassoon.

2.

Bach first. Prelude  
to everything  
else,  
          he  
is our B.C., the primal one,  
the tone  
          cast on all time to come  
the shadow  
of the bassoon rises and falls.

**This instrument  
always sounds wrong,  
comes from outside music  
from a land of being,  
of suffering and running away  
and coming home,**

**wrong**

**by its nature, the way nature  
is wrong too,  
as if a beast had to die  
in pain to breathe such sounds,**

**but that's only natural,  
nature's like that,**

**sings**

**truest as it goes.**

**Goes away.**

**Shadows**

**dimming into the dark.**

**Cherry blossoms**

**falling in the prime.**

**3.**

**Or on our little island**

**there is a single solitary tree**

**in the graveyard,**

**a paulownia**

or princess tree,  
its flowers come before the leaves  
and when those fragrant purple blossoms fall  
they leave seed capsules behind,  
pointed ovals,  
                  hollow, cracking open, hard,  
hollow as wood, hollow as the sound of the bassoon.

4.

He transposes what Beethoven  
heard (or wanted to hear)  
on the cello for the bassoon.  
A rounded box with strings  
becomes a man with breath  
pouting into a hollow tube  
though quivering reeds.

American day *aj*, day of the reed,  
tube, rushes, human spine  
up which all the emssages pass  
or sing, trying to reach the mother brain  
so far below the music.

5.

Seize the moment  
the music doesn't last,  
the pretty girl is pretty





7.

**All the bodies with their breaths and fingers  
all together now understanding out loud,  
make us be the animal we pretend to be,  
human love human fear human history  
and weare really nothing at all but  
bright joyous spirit playing brief on a field of ash**

**13 April 2013**

## **CRYING**

**Crying to reprove the world  
the way a child cries  
because a child knows  
the way things are  
is not the right way,**

**the child knows better,  
the cry of a child  
is the Tao, the cry  
is Buddha Nature crying out  
from the bloody tissue of how things seem.**

**2.**

**I dreamt a child was crying—  
after a difficult task accomplished,  
challenging, well carried out,  
now carrying something from it  
home to his father stands there  
waiting, the child stumbles  
and falls, starts crying his eyes out,  
relief, exhaustion, safe to last, to say  
the way things are is not the way things really are.**

**3.**

**Crying his eyes out—  
to cry the world right  
deny the easy etes,  
the cozy senses  
that claim authority  
over his young being,**

**he is a being intact  
already knowing something  
in himself that the world  
as-is will never tell him,  
never confirm, always  
makehim doubt. But now  
the truth is out,  
the child is crying,  
the sun is coming out.**

**14 April 2013**



=====

**Poems have few words  
because you have to read them slow  
a lampshade for example  
in the living room of a house  
you walk past but the light's not on.**

**15 April 2013**

=====

**Sweet sarcasm of the middle class  
if I can do just one thing right  
a ship sails up the Seine  
as far as Alexander's bridge  
where some pigeons are waiting for it  
with a human soul breathless in their beaks.**

**15 April 2013**

=====

**But I loved you love  
made me do it  
the tower the torn envelope  
the shattered flower pot  
the hand where no hand should be—  
not a touch, not on skin,  
in the air, waving, waving,  
where goodbye is the same as hello.**

**15 April 2013**



=====

**He heard a tone a sound a note.  
Note, tone? At waking heard  
or it woke him.**

**Went downstairs  
his son's keyboard, figured out  
how to turn it on, pressed down  
keys in different octaves till  
he found at last one note. Tone.  
G below middle C.**

**He played it  
again. he called it playing now  
and again. Held his index  
finger on the key the sound endured.  
Why does it last so long.**

**If  
he lets it go will he climb back up  
and be asleep again?  
Is that how sound is supposed to work?**

**16 April 2013**



=====

**It will get me there  
before I do  
your banjo Tizzy  
will be planging**

**and suddenly the woods  
are full of dancing  
round and rabbit  
square and fawn**

**I like the attitude  
that you've got on  
you make me hide  
myself in hearing.**

**16 April 2013**

=====

**Get me out of the picture  
then you can see  
the mountain the ocean the yellow  
lichen on the rocks by the shore  
the blackbird walk the gull soar  
you can even see the wind  
see the sound of the waves.**

**16 April 2013**

## **ISOLA**

**The sea whispered  
into my right ear  
through your lips  
it smelled like your breath.**

**16 April 2013**

=====

**Be fluent and forgive  
the wheel is waiting  
it becomes an animal  
hurries to your house  
slips under the door  
and soon learns to talk.**

**What does a wheel say  
while you are sleeping?  
What else are dreams  
really except wheels  
still or turning, wheels  
or your ancestors still  
trying to remember?**

**16 April 2013**

