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## **CICADAS**

**If you hurt one of these little machines  
you'll be reborn in seventeen years  
with red eyes and golden wings  
and make a lot of noise  
sing frantically a little while  
a demon or a daimon just like me.**

**(28 June 2013)**

## ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 10

*for Betty*

**On a scale of 1 to 10**

**the rain falls wet**

**Lenin's mummy outlasts glasnost.**

**The kingdom of cicadas rises and falls,**

**on a scale of 1 to 10**

**our caves are brighter now and less dank**

**diner coffee keeps getting better**

**waitresses get older and blonder**

**and I don't know for sure where all this goes**

**Nero Wolfe would call it amphigory,**

**nonsense verse, nonsense with numbers,**

**on a scale of 1 to 10**

**I've hardly begun**

**the muddy Orinoco impregnates the sea,**

**the Homestead Act is far away**

**but the prairies are still there**

**people I knew got acres in Alaska**

**even in the 1950s -- ah,**

**there's a number at last, or four of them,**

**all of them but one on a scale of 1 to 10**

**and that one was none**

so on a scale of 1 to 10  
the world has not even yet begun  
and all the pizza parlors and battleships  
are just illusions and I'm beginning  
(speaking of beginnings)  
to wonder about me,

on a scale of 1 to 10 am I here yet,  
is there anyone behind this noise you hear,  
people buzzing about the cicadas, poor things,  
they don't even exist on a scale of 1 to 10,  
only André Breton has got their number,  
*Arcane 17* from long ago Gaspé, and Canada,  
what is Canada on a scale of 1 to 10,  
and shall I count the ways,  
let alone Massachusetts?

On a scale of 1 to 10  
pain for instance is usually at zero or eleven  
but pleasure measures  
itself meekly, how rarely joys  
or even blisses  
get past 8 or 9,  
and from what we read in the Bible  
heaven doesn't even get to 7,  
all those feathers, all that  
stone-age music on tin harps.

**But where was I on a scale of 1 to 10,  
was I a pirate was I a priest,  
all nouns are 10 all verbs are maybe  
depending on who's looking,  
on who's talking,  
and who is listening?**

**On a scale of 1 to 10  
is it you or is it him,  
the man in the moon, the woman in the wind  
or is it window, on a scale  
of 1 to 10 is it even now yet,  
this bright day I'm trying to believe  
all the numbers scattered round my feet,  
birds chasing beetles, shadows chasing sun,  
on a scale of 1 to 10  
am I even me?**

**(28 June 2013)**

194.

**So much denial kings before Eden  
nothing was ever, all the rest was obvious  
Orpheus exiting from the underside of words  
to try again and again for pretty sunny days  
but o no o no Vienna always wins  
flee back to ferly land and talk to daisies  
feast on clover and try to be  
superbly be, as if a lion walked off a coat of arms  
and moved into a tower on another  
and we lived together beside an almond tree  
the weather always told us what to do  
look over the wheat field a ship comes sailing.**

**195.**

**Elmendorph's Corners ten acres of Kansas in the Hudson Valley**

**I go there at night to see the stars escaped from trees**

**or did when my objectives could still focus**

**past the play of boy and girl and see the soft bed of it**

**and all these bright people going up the air**

**the further away they are the more they blaze**

**(28 June 2013)**

**196.**

**And there are the children at the gate  
the psalmists keening by the hilltop shrines  
the lean poesy of denunciation  
when praise is all the air that feeds  
our holy fire  
once for all  
it spoke and said Do not be all male  
for the masculine alone is weak  
terribly weak and needy of conflict to assert  
what cannot be asserted  
the unprovable axiom of manhood  
building empires wrong again and again wind blows away.**



**197.**

**The stones begin to speak now  
tell me all I know  
long ago but all too close the trees  
whose house is that with one light showing  
I dug a well where no water was  
I built a staircase down to solid rock  
no cellar no root cellar no winter apples  
spread the table with no cloth  
on each empty plate a spoon of dust  
for it likes if you do not waste the fuel for flames  
sit quiet with the shivered memories of your life  
now you can do nothing but listen and no one speaks.**

**(29 June 2013)**

198.

**The poor poor blame the billionaires  
but I say the poor are to blame  
so many of them wanting to have more more  
isn't there a way of wanting less  
no food no shelter no wanting at all?  
if all the poor laughed all at once  
the billionaires would crumple up and blow away  
he said so just be hungry with a smile  
be lonely and speak to no one  
already the ink on hundred dollar bills is fading  
already the water in your well turns into wine  
already gold melts pours out a highway to some world.**

**199.**

**Posthuman is to be beyond desire  
to want no more than wood does  
standing in the sunlight in the snow  
making more of us by being so  
and those stones know us too  
one day calcium will have a voice  
garnet in the Adirondacks speak  
red wisdom to the risen poor  
be enough the other side to be!  
this is politics the throb of music  
Bartok Beethoven Bruckner Bach.**

**200.**

**How heavy the weight of blank paper  
carried all my life in blunt photography  
spiritual effluent of Eusapia Palladino  
the crux of psychic plausibility  
does all this light come out of a woman's body  
is there any other source for splendor in the world  
om tare tutare ture soha  
she is sixteen still green in the ways of men  
and she alone can save us from calamity  
or tell us who can  
listen to the green girl at last  
the ever-virgin the truth the wisdom sleeps beside me.**

**(29 June 2013)**

**201.**

**As if in mime an elegant body told  
the whole story from grass to cathédrale  
innumerable declensions of her single noun  
the dancer absolute  
so the mild persistent taste of moving anywhere  
from lawn to grass again the poor smell of money too  
we live in poverty we shadows of some great wealth  
the potentates the kings whose kingdoms fit in their wallets  
they rule the world but we could too  
as this lone dancer springs up from the sounding floor  
and with a single swerve of movement  
changes space forever in the way we see.**

**(30 June 2013)**

202.

The only thing that can't go on is going on  
it all begins every perceptual quantum afresh  
only the qualia sometimes linger  
o Abelard o quanta qualia  
the golden sabbaths of the wounded heart  
wanting to know how to make it go  
don't let the children come in  
all birds belong to you and fish are mine  
pale wild-eyed ones swimming in my cavern  
we who walk along the ground the strangest are  
misshapen by            bent over a bad book  
our whole lives pictured there in code.

**203.**

**Muybridge photos of a breaking heart  
a daffodil in haste a monkey in a window  
a dreary paper they call The Daily Olds  
deer are watching from the new woods  
how many years have they been here  
looking, crashing into our cars, waiting for something  
waiting for us to do something about ourselves  
units of intelligent remorse  
all the broken answers  
war is never an option war is never  
bring me your hand to hold at least  
the old man's sword used to cut bread.**

204.

**Don't put up more signs  
I hear them hammer their stakes in  
for sale signs by the frightened houses  
how poignant to move among the living  
how her body leaps to welcome circumstance  
what the editor wrote down instead of 'God'  
haunted by temple friezes a harlot in heaven  
noble souls entrusted to my care  
catch a reflection of the rising sun  
outline with pencil the shadows of the leaves  
till all the trees are written down  
then sleep beside it till the rooster crows.**



205.

I hear him over the hill or is that the sun in my eyes  
a picture long enough to wrap around your waist  
and go romancing to an old book  
slippery pavement on the road to Neaux  
in this cicada year the moon says less  
moon no bigger than a mosquito  
moon buzzing in my eyes  
till the cock crowed and here I am  
cicadas fuguing with the buzzing in my ears  
with one hypnotic pass I wake me up  
look Robert there are days inside the day  
the birds are gone but the sky is still there.

**206.**

**Could I have heard another when I thought was now  
leave every I out and see what it means  
real presence split the log he is there  
drink salvation from an empty glass  
too many voices for so few words  
we suffer from the vice of versa  
they marched into battle with The World Turned Upside Down  
revolution only benefits the landlords old or new  
would she kiss the icon of a commissar?  
at some point or no point it will get tired of me  
then what will you do  
not even the wind in your ears?**

207.

**Starting and stopping is the same as love  
properties of archaic Tocharian  
guide me grammar through the spiel of trees  
obscure selvedge of a vast weave  
a carpet made of sand  
flowers half faded dinky here and there  
your footsteps rearrange the floor  
walking and talking like a blessed Greek  
they didn't know how lucky they were  
pagans are the only ones left laughing  
after the grimoire of the bank accounts  
the Grand Guignol of local government.**

208.

Maddening stillness of the summer air  
here as if nobody's there, nobody cares  
I come from wind and you far more  
crystal movement of the invisible  
emphasis belongs to humankind  
gods write the book we put the italics in  
the trouble is as with Hopkins' beauty  
it never seems not to be a poem  
never a simple language thing that happens by  
still seizes the breath or chills the heart  
there has to be nobody listening when I speak  
so that the words break free to all of you.

**209.**

**Lead the document across the sea  
where Quaker folk will still hymn their silence  
and the red rooves of Whitby doze in the mist**

**(ix desunt)**

**(30 June 2013)**