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MANY ORGANS

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MANY ORGANS

In the middle of the brain, that soft and endless space, there is a small island. On it a single pine tree grows. Immensely tall, it is fecund all the time, and lets fall thousands and thousands of pine cones, each crowded with fertile seeds that taste good too. These cones and seeds are ideas and thoughts. You know what it's like when you sit in front of a fire tossing pine cones in, how they crackle and spit flame and sometimes explode. That is called thinking.

We should sit by the fire, even in summer. We are children playing with pine cones, we hang around the trunk of the tree, sprawl out in its shadow, sleep in the smell of it. Pine tar gets in our hair and makes us sticky. What we think sticks to us. And we tend to stink of whatever we've been thinking.

We are children of that tree. When the wind happens, or sometimes when we just breathe, enough breath moves to make the pine branches make sound. We discuss Pythagoras, we break sticks into different lengths, we chew on them till they get soft, soft ideas, or char them in the fire and write with the burnt sticks. Scripts. As for me, I am one who feels fated or privileged to enter again the situation of being with someone beneath that tree.

Sharing thoughts we say, but never do. How could we? Or any? A thought is something already shared, the fact that it *comes to mind* means it comes from there, there where you already are, thinking. The thoughts preshared we divide again by speaking. Putting our own spin. Our own spell. Sometimes all we do is listen to one another think.

Being as big as they are, how can my feet even so support how big I feel I am. Long as they are, how do your legs ever let the earth come up near you, or reach your heart, let alone your brain. Being in body must mean something, but we never quite know what. Or we know it keenly sometimes, but not for long. It is very unpatriotic to say, but I think we are foreigners to our body. Lust is trying to get back home. Sickness is treason. Stuff like that is easy to think about beneath the tree. Do you think the tree itself thinks? Or is it left for us to do, servant stuff, putting in endless words what the tree knows?

We are so many organs, and as you say the skin is the body's largest organ, the one we know best of self and other. It has color and texture and sensation. It calls out to other skin in ways that are urgent and embarrassing. Sometimes one's own skin seems the furthest thing away in the world. But it lets things in and out. It is the mailman coming with news, the TV repairman, the little guy from Oaxaca who trims your lawn.

Some say the brain is just the skin inside the body, past and future all folded tightly together, sulca and cortex and foramen, the whole sacred pudding quivering with everything but now. Now is the hardest thing. It's what the skin wants most. What do you say?

Because the organ that interests me most is you. And when we talk, and maybe even when we think about people, that is the organ we use. The organ we play with. The organ we play.

You speak of Germany's north a long time ago. Did you know that Bach once as a young man walked all the way to Lübeck to hear Buxtehude play the organ? He

went on foot all the way to the ear. On the coast of the Baltic that was, the shallow dangerous sea that stretches from the Danes to the Finns and Russians. One late winter day I walked on it, from the shore a few hundred yards out, over the ice in the pallor of seafog and evening coming. I think of that sometimes when I think about you, finding a home for you to come from, walking over the ice landward, perhaps to me. All those languages up there, German and Low Saxon, the trickster tongues of Owlglass and piracy, the tongues of Mecklenburg and Pomerania, veering towards the incomprehensible Estonians who live in the rising sun. Tongues. We think of tongues. Language is the skin of what we think we mean. But what do we mean?

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