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IN TOUCH WITH INTELLIGENT YESTERDAYS

1.

That was the title
now for the bridal

veil falls away or
being lifted

to disclose
the lips' last

immaculate kiss
and the organ

swells its suppose
finally we

begin world
history of weddings.

2.

because it's we
who've been waiting
all through music

why? to see
the mothers of language
cry at the oaf,

moi, who carries now
their only daughter

off into the jungle
of actually being said.

3.

Or it could be *toi* too,
the better animal

you whose soul
reflects outward

from the mirror
of your bright skin

a proper
speculation whereas I

4.

Enough about you and me.
The mothers weep
and that's not good.

Language has no father
so the guests are uneasy
asking one another

who if not you?

5.

Polka was an old dance
and a fox trot somewhat
recenter. You could do
it in Latin why not now?
Will we ever have peace?

6.

It is the last day
of disorganized feeling.

After now comes then
and then is a firm place

battened down and able.
The distance from the bed

to the door is measured
and no more need known.

Paradise of skeptics
o I recall that tune

the sad wolf growling
to himself on the stoop.

7.
He howls sometimes
when he forgets the script
of simpering quietude
which is all he makes
of our kind of music.
Money one more marriage.

8.
So get a divorce for his sake
for Christ's sake
god of the wildwood
whose will is unity
at peace with appetite.
His golden eyes, his final bite.

9.
No. No. A different
kind of play, a different
union is at stake.

Two species interwoven
to speak a fresh word.

Something worth listening to,
one more of Mother Nature's lies.

10.

So what I'm after is
a wedding that goes
on as long as marriage does,

the horserace never ends
you know, nobody wins
but the crowd loves it,

people love to lose.

11.

Because 'wedding' is 'wager'
in its root. Not wassail,
not a Polish band, not a rabbi,
not free cake and kisses.

12.

Listening to the first movement
of Beethoven's Op.130 quartet
I am astonished that anybody
ever gets married.
Not because I'm an elitist.
Because I'm a frightened child.

13.

But can things that talk to each other
ever really be different sizes of life?

Is it always the measure of that first day
that spells all the rest?

Incoherent by nightfall,
exhausted, drunk and in a foreign place
with bright people gawking at them
— is this the shape
of human life ever after?
Eden was wedding?
Earth was marriage and no divorce?

14.
The violin finally kicks in.
Bless me, Father, but is this sin?

15.
Shivaree they used to say,
make a lot of noise
at wedding's end
to make the demons go away

they say but really meant
to keep bride safe from the groom
until the break of day
so that their very first

prayer together
would fall up into the silent
sun and leave us safe on earth
where we evidently like to be.

16.

Because a bride is a bridge
and who knows to what
terrible country might she
take us by the hand and
cross us even now.

17.

No matter how fast they dance
their tarantelles and furiantes
they're still on the ground.

The earth will not desert us—
lie beneath the table and sleep awhile.
We have so many mothers.

1 August 2008

PLANH

1.

Let it wait an urgent hour
what do I care, it is a phone
I am a man, a kind of *animal*
who hesitates

2.

I walk the blue between
I measure carefully
cupfuls of sleep
I jig my little jig

3.

lachrymose means sadsack
today means yesterday
struck out again
and all of it has to do again.

4.

Must. I want my glasses off
and really see
but I'm not wearing them

now who do I blame
in this den of please?
My sobful syntax
your entertainment?

5.

The complaint: digging
an aggrievement
deep into Entitlement
and waiting for the pain
to desolate your neighborhood.

6.

The agronomy of resentment
fills the self-help section
where a little girl sits on the floor
looking up her browsing mother's skirt
wondering why it's so dark up there.

2 August 2008

CLOUDS

I get it now. Life outlives repose.
The cloud is always listening—

did you know this: all those vapors
up there are human words breathed out

condensing there in stately towered cumulus
or nimbus rushing to rain down on us again

other people's meanings with our own
drenched now with outrageous signifiers.

2 August 2008

= = = = =

Unbalance the page
till the words slip off

or pack it tight
like a yeshiva student's Torah

stuffed with commentary
no room to lose.

No matter. The word
once spoken lasts.

That is the glory the heaven
the problem the flower

the case. Whatever is spoken
becomes the case. TILT

the old machine used to say
the game is over. Look

at language sideways
and one of you dies.

3 August 2008

LISTENING TO MY SOUL

all right it's a waltz
you're right
you can keep time
and I can't

you can see the veins
on the leaf I
can barely see the tree
but there are my

hands around you
and I hold tight
these are my words
squeezed from your lips

*

is it enough to be right
is it enough to pick the flowers
the night leaves in the mind when I wake

if not me, who else will ever
pick them up and set them
high on some vagrant altar

to whatever god is passing by?
so let me be wrong
the goddess still gets her tigerlilies

*

they're still happy from where they were
when we were the way they are or seem to be
an operetta over the horizon the sun is raining
think of how dark though it is inside their clothes
beyond the footlights no one left alive

and only this sprightly music to begin
a cosmology lesson, listen Parmenides my heart
is sore you can heal it with your dance
and if you don't dance your sister does
and if you have no sister there's the mountain
just outside of town with the little chapel
where the pretty girl with leprosy
comes to say her prayers to God knows who.

*

'my' soul it said
and then I doubted,
maybe it's 'the'
soul I'm meant

to listen to
until I die—
no time for silence
that inherited disease

*

first listen to decide
to what it says

is my soul the Other too,
and what is mine

by law so far away?
and what I call my own

belongs to them,
the other one or ones

lazy on the Amazon,
the Kalmuk steppe

the iron foundry on the moon
sometimes I feel them

in my hands like the feel
of someone I just let go

*

“the morning was all singing” Dylan Thomas
ended Milk Wood by saying
I think I remember that from somewhere
a sly man standing on the apron of the stage
while all the no-account adulterers
smiled in their late sleep
or seemed to, it was only a play.
Nobody touched anybody really,
and no one slept. Just singing is.

*

3 August 2008

LA BALANÇOIRE

1.

A cycle
says it
twice.

2.

Your swing
squeals
in the still
afternoon.

You rise,
fall, tell
me something
with each
up and down.

3.

The crescent moon
of your trajectory
seated often
in mid-air.

4.

I love the sound,
I see myself recording it,
mixing it down
with others of its kind.
The beautiful
polygamy of sound.

5.

Slow now, a crow
hears you, makes
a call like yours.
The cry of sky.

6.

Your heels
slow you down.
Then you rise
again, push
up to the cloud.

7.

All human effort
to ascend.
Girl on the swingset
rising high.
Nimrod
was this.

3 August 2008

= = = = =

Art is the miracle they pay me to expound
said the little teacher at her desk.
Bravely. Palliation but no cure
at least this side of the changeful Moon.

3 August 2008

RESCUED FROM THE SKY

or the language is a little bus
diesel-reeking and a goat in it
that brings us pilgrims home

we thought there was a church
it was a mountain we thought
heaven was the way to go

the top of it and never got
and there we were abandoned
into the winter of what just was.

Help. Help. And someone came
up out of our throats and said
Just believe a different thing

and turn. We turned and turned
and there the little bus was
waiting for us and up we climbed

into something natural to us
a made thing a machine a statement
humans made and could live with

here in the midst of ourselves
reverent atheists with chapped lips
in love with far windows.

4 August 2008

LEAVING

The leaving pattern
the champagne of artifice
then sudden sobriety.

A girl in a stateroom
I never see before
the siren happens
and the sea is gone.

Boatless I drivell
chewy platitudes
snatched from Pirke

trying to keep her
interest but she's gone
with the harbor
the water the ship.

Now I am a corner
faintly noble inter
sected by some streets.

It must be her mother
in the food wagon
handing out nutella
crepes and suddenly

I'm glad I have no boat.

4 August 2008

= = = = =

Helots of heaven.
They do what they're told.
Because love is a revealed religion
and the distant Godhead is never far.
Dream me into your skin.

4 August 2008

= = = =

All colors
in one piece of wood.
Nature has
everything in it
but me. I am the rule
with no exceptions.
A clock with no hands.

4 August 2008

AS IF

girls go through seven phases:
infancy, childhood, girlhood, godhead, womanhood, motherhood, old age.
And you can diagnose a man by
noting which of the five inner phases impassions him most.
Is he pedophile, nympholept, devotee, husband, old Oedipus?
Love, leider, has its own rules.

4 August 2008