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And not know music for what it is
buzzing in an old man's ears
the blood's own Gaelic blithering in there

nerves busy diagnosing other nerves
howsoever be it, he hears it,
shout of sunglare on a sunset pond

whispering snapshot Mother on wedding day.
That's what music is or does,
everything turns into sound and no way out—

each brain endures its special kind of silence.

4 January 2007

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But how to keep going without thinking
is what your travel movie shows, later later
comes commentary and decipherment
when the caravan of your learning
stumbles at last on the city of your lust
where men in the market place rudely
disclose the meaning of your expedition
and judge in loud voices the worth
of your detailed reports, all your guesses
all your wishes fleshed out with by now
tattered specimens of wild life
you trapped almost by chance, peacock,
dead lizard, branch of dead coral, the sun,
the moon, anything you could carry back
to lend authenticity to your verbose remarks,
the bird that makes a noise like piledrivers
a native woman with hair the color of straw.

4 January 2007

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Women who have a feel for flowers
shame me, their tolerant, incredulous
amazement at my ineptitude
when it comes to the mysteries
of earth and water, patience, sunlight,
regularity. I have not much trade in these.

(They come and bring a few, come back once in a while and bustle about the stem,
fussing with bracts, petals, leaf fall, unknown pests, sprays, elixirs, humidities, pH of
the poor little flower pot, mine.)

Flowers are imports from another world
where things grow by themselves
intending nothing but to go on being themselves.
And here they come into my deliberate house
seeking comfort and care, where every second
is spent making something else out of
anything that is simply itself, where I judge
myself entirely by how other I become
from what I started out with, where everything
is fuel for some immense half-conscious
transformation – and I'm supposed to
spend my time mothering a rubber plant
that wants nothing but to flop its simple
leaves out in mild sunshine and just be.

4 January 2007

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Dead thing on road

Behavior of birds

ενθεοτισμα

pieces of paper everywhere
all over the floor.

A piece of paper on the floor is a dead bird
a stone's breakfast

turns you into a god

pieces of paper trying to wake.

Green moonlight last night and the night before

tonight is blue. Black.

End of names.

I look off the deck and what I see is
nothing different from what sees me

See the moonlight inside her clothes

This music made me

Chained birds groaning as they lift the sky

4 January 2007

NOTE TO SELF AFTER READING P. SZENDY

Disdaining – or just not bothering to honor
the pomp and dignity of the boundaries
round what the composer – or performer –
take or purport to be the ‘work itself,’
abstaining – thus – some noble Aristotelian –
or Thomist – or even common sense – notion
of the integrity of the work ‘itself,’ and allowing
oneself to hear across the frontiers – not via some
more or less specious theoretical intertextual
machinery of musical – or other – texts –
but through an experientially based – hence
phenomenological – apprehension of just what
is happening inside your head right now –
as long as now lasts – is what I call listening.

5 January 2007

ШОСТАКОВИЧА:

Preludes and Fugues of Shostakovich:

1. C Major

Catch a bird
just cause it's there
mei khint, catch
it with the left
because your right
is holding a candle
call this the night
lovers catch
birds in the dark

(prelude)

wake with each
other's shadow
in their arms

Tomorrow you look
the bird up in some book
and find only blank pages
where your bird should be

or any bird

those vacant pages
are the liberty of the world
the bird still
twittering
lets you actually hear.

And then it's all up,
bird in the rafters
the rafters in the roof
roof in the sky
and up you go
to deal with that,
through broken
tiles you spy

(fugue)

roots of a big tree
above you
reaching down,
you grab the tap root
soft and squirmy
as a captured bird,
you haul yourself up
through all the intricate
diverging – that word
comes to your mind –
pathways of little
roots till you reach
the ground above you
where that tree's at home,
you have arrived
in that world
in the form of a new
fruit, the tree proffers
generously you
to the ladies up there
and their lords,
to be their little apple.

5 January 2007

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A rock falling
is the sea.

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ШОСТАКОВИЧА:

2. a minor

Thinking goes too fast for me.

(prelude)

I just have to sit and watch it
till the thought itself
sits down beside me
and tells me where it's been.

(fugue)

Confusing me even further,
tells me: Time
did this to me.

Yet without time
I could not sit beside you
in this life,

uninvited even
as I am and you too.
Now hear the places I have been.

(But already my eyes are heavy,
close, I sleep, slip
out of his dream.)

5 January 2007

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Such things coming my way
Chopin on his island
chapel open summerhouse the sea

for a long time a man can live on what he hears.

5 January 2007

AFTER NERUDA

And then the admiral comes
wanting his own house back,
this pinkish six-foot edifice
he lent you once
and here you've been
making free with it
all the days of your life

now here he is
demanding his rent
or else evict you
and you don't have that kind of money

no man I know can pay that rent,
the exorbitant, the last breath.

Denk' es, o Seele!
where will you go,
your wagon piled high with ownership
trundling away in mud and winter
from the one thing you called yours

but that you never owned.
And even when the sun comes up
all you will be able to see are the brass
buttons on the Admiral's overcoat.

5 January 2007

EPIPHANY

It was the warmest day. Sitting in the summerhouse in January made him feel naughty, like being drunk in church. He hadn't been drunk in years, and churches he went into only for funerals. But still. He sat in his summerhouse on the Feast of the Epiphany, the Shewing Forth of Our Lord fructiferously incarnate in human species to a pack of Asiatic travelers. Who worshipped and went away.

Where did they go? What did they think with what they'd seen? Why is it so warm today? Blue sky amply stocked with small puffy white clouds none too white. A pretty day, his mother would have said. Which mother?

For now, feeling comfortable, even a little warm in his synthetic fleece shirt, he was learning a strange thing from the sky: Sky tells us all the time but do we listen?

He had asked idly where the Wise Men went and what they thought. But what the sky was telling him right now is this: Doesn't matter about them. Don't you know a man has many mothers?

And a woman too. Of course. Many mothers. One for his body and one for his soul, one for his appetites and one for the ears he hears with and one for his eyes, and one for the old man he will become. Without such a mother a man dies young. Because becoming old means being born again of the Last Mother, and death is only the puberty of that last juvenescence.

You've lost me, he said, and the sky said You always do. Think of it this way: every time you learn something, to do or hold or just know, it is some mother who gives birth to that skill or practice in you. "Honor your mothers!" said the voice on the mountain, but Moses wrote down "... father and mother," wrongly thinking 'mothers' was the voice's quaint divine way of saying 'parents.' As if he could correct the dialect of God! No. Honor all your mothers is what the voice meant, and it is not the third commandment but the first. As I am your mother now.

6 January 2007

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How easily I forget
all the rest.
Someday take a picture of it,

the small rain
how it feels
as it settles in my hair

these are the things
(you'll never know)
you need to know about me.

6 January 2007

ANOTHER THING HE FELT

the day like milk
as if he and the day itself
were convalescents
from a forgotten malady
healed in the night

so even the trees
(he thought)
forgive me.

6 January 2007

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now take it easy,
easy, and maybe even
one day find

where that *it* is
we do so take
when told.

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Moonlight coming from behind me
bathes the low rock ridge
edge of my property, I gaze up at it,
blue of midnight sky, white
clouds with moonlight in them,
light coming from inside the clouds,
the bare trees up on the ridge
range theatrically away
into the distance also lit
Christ the sky must be full of moons.

7 January 2007

THE ANTIQUITY OF IT

Everything tends to forgive a rock.
No hard feelings. Not much
sense in revenge. Kohinoor,
mountain of light, shatter a diamond,
Xerxes. I'll leave it to my
Persian in-laws to explain. Cambyses.

Greeks knew more than they let on,
alcohol for example – they could and did
distill but hid what they were up to
under poetry, moly, nectar, trade marks
for their patent medicines and we never knew.
Diluted 24:1 in ordinary use, drunk straight
to make a Cyclops wobble and pass out.
Getting a boy drunk on your first date
till all he is is a one-eyed beast raging
to know you, hurtle deep inside your chamber.

There are so many miracles,
that we can make each other happy,
just one at a time of us with one of us,
make each other so happy or so sad.
All we need is one another. The power
of affinity is endless. Like the sea
in love with so many shores, anxious
to lick and swallow each until
there is no difference left – and that
is love. But there always is a difference
left, and that is love.

What makes you think
the Greeks had vodka? I read it in a barley dream,
a tall column of copper, twisted like Bernini,
high as Pergamon, a coil down which the elixir
crept, our secret medicine, and drop by drop
into the waiting cup.

How could they not know,
they who knew that steam moves cars
and how fat the earth was, who worshipped

on an altar in the Keramikon – described
by Pausanias but now lost – the radiant face
of Prometheus the first distiller, stealing
bliss and befuddlement at once from Zeus,
that blurry ecstasy the gods live all their lives?

7 January 2007