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(Day 13-Tijax)

A sort of day of argument
brass letters let into a silver ring
in Hebrew as it seemed
Tubal Cain and Jubal Cain
are masters here, from one
hammering bronze out at the forge
the other picked up rhythmic music,
the hard heartbeat, otherwise just
the slop of timeless tune
unspecified, shepherd boy
bleating to his sheep. I feel
contentious about this myself.
Knife Day, you should never
hear the percussion, it should never
be audible as such. (Note to self:
this is bullshit. Signed: Max Roach.
No, I mean, except when the drums
themselves contrive to sing.
Oh. Maybe so.) You should never
hear anything but the singer's smile
vapid as usual, her shiny dress,
or her eyes, his beard, their chubby
fingers o, paws of a soprano.
You should never hear anything
but what you see. I am the Syn
Aesthete. Come watch
the bright song with me.

1 March 2007

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But there is an orchestra out there.
Skin in here. The singer's voice
poured through her eyes, told me
she was in love with all of this,
all of us, the sounding and the listening,
the old wood of the recital hall
the snow outside, nothing
was going to escape the radiation
music roused in her to emit.
She became what she heard
so that we become her.

1 March 2007

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Is it too early for me to be me?
Read a book. Catch a herring
in the fridge, put on some music.
Wait, I'm already listening. Wait,
I can't eat before breakfast
or else what I eat will have been
breakfast, as anything I might
ever do turns out to be
just something I shall have done.

1 March 2007

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Tension not the same as stress
the way Latin takes longer than Saxon.
Sometimes my hands tremble. Sometimes they're still.

1 III 07

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It's one of those mornings I don't want to read anything,
everything written already is a sort of threat.
Watering the house plants is beyond me,
too much like having a conversation.
I vaguely wonder as I do five days out of seven
whether the orchid will ever flower again
and what it will mean if it does so or not not, what.
Tannhäuser's staff, new sap, enough ink left in me
to write the history of the world
all the way from here to tomorrow, that inconceivable frontier.

1 March 2007

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Tranquil frenzy, Bach chaconne.
The violinist is Christ
suffering alone so we can have
the special light that only hearing shines.

1 March 2007

SONATA

for Tom Meyer

The sonata form goes to sea.
Sometimes when I'm writing in my notebook
the way the words march out and spread
looks like your penmanship.
This is a quiet hour, when I'm at peace enough
to write slowly, and watch the contours
of what I write. This is friendship.
You let me listen to your hand moving:
a note on a poem you sent me thirteen months ago.

*

And then comes back.
I am the lonest maybe

character you ever see.
Or what was I then,

a banjo struck by lightning,
baby crawling in the swamp,

raindrop on an oakleaf
to call this new place home.

*

Because the sea finally gets tired of our ships
and either swallows us or lets us float
back to the margins of the real event
where we make peace with landscape
and try to turn into trees. This means money,
what we brought back from the gallant Indies,
keen aroma of your best friend's cigar.

1 March 2007

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How fond Verlaine is of the verb *luire*, 'to shine or gleam' must be noted here. Presumably because its present tense, 'it's shining!', is *lui*, identical with the word for the secret boy-life of his love-life, 'him.'

1 March 2007

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I feel like Kafka when I hear a chorus
all those people are shouting at me

I don't mind one at a time, soprano,
tenor, dark Boris bellowing at god,

or sometimes two (Sophie, Octavian)
or even three (add the Marschallin)

but then it gets confusing, the voices
hammer in at me, a hundred English mothers

tell me what to do, ask me questions,
drive me to battle or infinity, Viennese

voices scream that the womanly
leads me on. Exhausted by their instructions

I sink into terrified repose. I suppose
Aristotle too had this in mind, pity, terror,

the many and the one, all the voices
that I hear are supposed to turn into me.

1 March 2007

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Writing with someone else's hand
inside my hand is like reading the Bible.
Or my hand inside someone else's hand
turns the pages. To be accurate again!
To be a peach tree in Florida rain
and a girl takes shelter. To be a book
and you read me revealed on your lap.
Pronouns will be the death of me.
Suppose a language pure of substitutes.
No pronouns. Write with hand inside hand.
Be book being read. Be lap. Be book on lap.
Be tree. The clamor of who I think I am
is stilled. Quieted into what I think
there actually is or could be. Bible. Tree.
A girl is as bad as a pronoun. Say a name.
A name is Florida. Bad girl. Accurate peach.

2 March 2007

IDENTITY KIT

I am me again
after long travel.
Travel of trains,
to be born from a plane.

The worst was that tin coffin
I slept in on the Jammu Mail
from Delhi up through the Punjab
to the Pakistan frontier.

Again and again I was born
discernibly me. The continuity
of specious identities
continues to amaze.

A man selling orange squash by the track
in Pathankot, I think he went
back to his wife that night
with my identity. Now I'm him,

trying to make everything sweet,
everything flow,
trying to sell it to strangers.

2 March 2007

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Christ is hanging on the cross every hour of the day
you don't suppose the crucifixion actually ended
it goes on forever with us and in us and mostly
because of us, what we do with what we're given
and what we do not do,

Arise, bring all that you have

and follow me

is what he must have said, don't give away
the little treasures time and karma let you play with,
use them, bring them with you and follow me

he must have said, the man on the cross
stretched out in the agony of each one of us.
I am sitting in the concert hall listening, wonderful
performance of Bruckner's seventh symphony
the vast architecture inside the heart, the stone
from which the heart is built, beehive, Chartres,

and through all the music I hear the crucifixion
Bruckner must have been feeling in his chest,
his fat peasant pectorals stretched wide
to make room to take his God inside himself
and be and bear the place where that is done,
the instruments of the passion, the wood,
hammer, nails, thorn, and above all the sky.

The shadow of all we are stretches on the sky.
This music is a treatise on building the sky.

2 March 2007

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Chemical chatter
inside the cell
makes me
think mean
time what am
I up to?

3 III 07

STYLE

Even the sun has styles. Cloudless sky epic poetry. Scattered cloud, good sturdy fiction. Overcast, the micromanagement of prose discourse. Its reflected radiance as moonlight, lyric poetry. Poetry is a reflection of something. Some word before aleph still speaking.

3 March 2007

POETRY SPOKEN HERE
is the sign on the door
of an empty room.

3 III 07

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Bluster. The wind of because.
Travail. A day is born

not so easy, night
is not a natural thing at all,

a remorse. An expression.
The dark thing that ends it

begins it. Now the wind
complains, scratches the wall,

everyone wants to be someplace
else, where you lift the book

and read that where you are
is a story happened years ago

Rhine castle maiden little boat
sugar sifts out of the pages

you know this because you taste it
you are bold with your tongue

to tell, her eyes and so forth.
While all this has been going on

you have drifted two miles downstream.

4 March 2007

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Everyone outlives himself.
This is the phenomenon called death.

4 III 07

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As if it were able to be
the self it pretends
innocently enough

the way a church
is almost supposed to pretend to be
heaven for an hour

deceiving no one
but inducing a species of weird
happiness

ruby votive lamps
and gold on the wall
so could it be me.

4 March 2007
betw. Croton and Yonkers

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Veiled postcards
from Yonkers to the Bronx as
if the slightest difference
meant all the miles,
Flags in late winter wind
run from the river.

4 March 2007