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PLAY ONE

Man in overcoat sitting at bare table.
On the table a vase of flowers dead and dying.

15 December 2006

8. K.246 “Lützow”

Straw. We always are.
We always see
flowers in winter
made, colored with color
by a will to see.

I speak this language too,
I am actually only an afterthought of it,

a lyric footnote
to what everybody else said

a girl dancing by himself
a bird frowning at the sea

that proves nothing
just as touching you
proves nothing but that I have hands

But why do I always hurry, feel hurried,
why is such a quick animal
hunting all through me for the next thing to do?
Is it prey, cheetah, or the moon
you're after, little wolf?

The hard thing to remember is
we're all born in the same year

tourists grin on the cathedral steps
their camera, digital, are smaller now,
childlike pleasures, I don't mind so much
the delicate jabber of English and Japanese

I have my own shadows to herd along the dusty road
my own language I'm trying to forget

the sun a cellphone ringing in my eyes.

II.

Or not see so much:
a box, a box he brought in
to show the class, empty,

“my mouth a disconnect,” he said,
“if I can get the next trick new
I think the war will end”

but I’m not sure his kind of war
has even begun, not yet at least,
I sympathize with his mistake,

I took my skin for a flag once,
I imagined that what I felt was good for you
and you needed news of it pronto

and I did. Now he
feels that way too but without the feeling.
Brings the community a box.

A box is to put things in.
Things you don’t have and maybe don’t even want.
But those things also need a box to call their own.

Is there a war we really need?
Is there a circle with a cube inside it
a pair of dice with no spots

a man carrying nothing in his hands but
thinking or supposing the space between them
is a box, or space enough, or a man can carry

space with him wherever he goes
and a box he tells us
a box is just anything at all that waits.

III.

I know you now.

--This same road, a year ago.

I know.

--You weren't sure about me then.

And now.

--And now not either or not yet?

I think I do, I think we'll go
along the road a bit.

--Just as we did.

It's strange to think that two people could walk
along a road and finally reach some city.

--It is strange. But why is it strange?

The blossoms, some pink, some white in the chestnut trees?

--Or their shadows. Why do we walk in shadow?

Why are we walking at all? Didn't we once
have the convenience of conveyance, wheeled?

--Wheels don't work anymore.

Wind, there's wind.

--Always on this road there's wind.

You see to know much more about this than I do. Have you been
this way many times before?

-- [Hums.]

Am I supposed to recognize that tune?

--I don't know about 'supposed.' I sang it to you last time. That's all we
know.

17 December 2006

9. K.271 “Jeunehomme”

The things the things
the things one knows
and every tune is stored
and every new thing comes home

your father's shadow
on your mother's door

the things
live in a world
a world is signs is omens
an omen is the world talking about itself
and afraid, a sign of a thinking thing

the things know how to sing
the things know how to dance in dreams
the things are elsewhere when we wake

but the things are where we are
they are the angels

a thing is an angel

we move among them while they stand

thoughts embody'd
and here on this empty road
a man is walking the familiar
the straight lines of his childhood
to taste the shadow of where he's been

to breathe things in
and make them breathe

the things that are his silent guardians
they keep watch
he feels them in his tears
when the sight of a cracked plate
or a new brown paper bag
not yet unfolded at the grocery

can make him full with a feeling
he can't find any label for,
not joy not grief, a strange
intensity of now,

a thing

is always now
and when you've lost a thing
(I've lost my golden ring)
you've lost your now

nowless then go sing
anytime you like
a lost boy on a lost road
looking for a lost thing
he'll never find
because a thing is now
and only here.

Saint Seraphim of Sarov
who kept his monks and nuns apart
so each could seek the lostness of the other
and find and find,
patron of those who seek lost things
(I found my ring)
Saint Seraphim pray for him
this little boy this little me

I will throw all my other things
and watch where they fall
and follow as well as I can
into the wilderness they show
by vanishing, and I will go there
and I will know, and knowing
will be the lost lost thing.

II.

River that comes over the hill as mist
river that runs me, river of no remember,
all that is known about you is your passing,

no hint of where you're from or where to go,
river that is just the animal of passing,

slow as the sun, slow even as the darkness

river we are seldom permitted to see
but sometimes stand on the mulchy shore
watching driftwood, the geese wild or resident,

the puzzling transactions of objects being moved
by something that looks like a republic of intentions
but no one I can stop and talk to, but you,

the whole of you, endure the flab of my address
all of us, brimming over with our ideas,
our ontologic jabber, river, listen one more time to me

river who swept Kant away along the shallow sea
river whose main cargo is the summer stars
meek reflections of the uneasy mind,

Tu Fu's river, river of pine green ornaments
that all are water, that all run through the hands,
river it is dangerous to understand

but I'm trying, I'm living beside you year after year
(we live among signs and portents, we dream
only what the river brings to mind) and sometimes rarely

I step down to the actual water, the water that is you
and is not you at all, and I touch it with my toes
to see if I still know how to feel,

river that tells me only confusion can be beautiful,
river of no certainty, a tuning fork is struck,
the hum of whom, to stay or go, river of I know.

III.

No help for the drowning man
but go deeper.
No help for the hand
but to touch more.

The steeple is falling
the street is full
this color bird

flies through the ground

the beggars run down the street
sailors carry flower girls around
it's all the way it was in books
when you could read

Gold coins roll out of roses
frightened children hate the sound of words
a word is only to tell them what to do
run away, the light
is disobedient, it shows
more than it's supposed, the line
runs through the town, the circus horses
prance along the railway track
only the children are afraid. Always afraid:

run faster. Stop and take a breath.
Go through your pockets. Raisins.
Dates. Stones. Enough to go on,
the forest is close now, frost comes soon,
people live inside everything,
people nobody has ever seen,

there is always somewhere else,
there isn't always only here,

only the dried fruit in your pocket
the little stones to keep you company
take them out and name them
and they will be your little soldiers

but even they keep telling you what to do.
To be is to be told.

Sometimes you sing, sometimes you get
so angry you don't even want to breathe.
You want to disobey, just disobey,
then you look at the stone again
and it still tell you freedom comes from doing this
whatever it says. Freedom is being here.
You don't believe a word of it, all you want
is to get away, away and disobey. Then

break free, run away, and learn to disobey
this palpitating Torah of the heart.

17 December 2006

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Under the houses
dark snakes mating—
another country,
settlement, relief
of not here.

 She bent
to touch one
then drew back
unafraid. Who?
A voice I knew
medium-well,
a quick mysterium,
alchemists everywhere I

18 December 2006

II. K.413

Hold a curl. Curve.
Over the room is room around me.
Roof. A word?

A word is a knife with no bread.

Push harder at the missing door.
Milk. She's always

on time I'm always late

trip the marble steps
weather means danger

carved hillside
images in rock
images are the only treasure

the carvings are huge rooms
each one a different shape

a telling

each one empty

a treasure is something waiting for you
you have to plug yourself into its sense of space
to seize the treasure and sail home

sail, veil, no home, no treasure
but the vast empty rooms
each room a different shape

shape is our treasure

you sashay past you empty me
each me a different you

shape? pleasure,
pronounced as in Oklahoma

is getting further and further away all the time
and we are stars too evidently goodbye goodbye
Big Bang and all that babble
about the infinite recedingness of the universe
everything departing everything rushing everywhere
and everywhere is just away

away from me and not so long ago and the city not far
everything exists to keep people apart
who otherwise would fall into each other
and make a bed of everything

when everything is supposed to be busy with its Father's business
carrying everything else so far away

and then I looked down
at the cold little stream runs past my house
and saw a little fish hurrying there too.

I miss you. But the French say
you are missing from me.
So when we meet some day
and ask who's to blame
let's hold hands and blame the little fishes.
Improper plural. *Tu me manques.* Blame language.

III.

Flags fly under water

cobblers work frantic for the emperor
and everything changes.
This music is about everything,
the everything that changes

and for once has something to say
about that most vexed agent
everybody. It says: beneath
the ocean another earth is waiting

beyond the sky another sky is breeding.
What we use up will be replaced
and somebody else will use it up—

how beautiful the wet flags of vanished kingdoms,
how beautiful a king is
when he is all power but has none
when he rides in the tumbrel to the guillotine
or when a queen rules a continent she has never seen
armyless, and with her smile alone—

take back my words
from politics and money,
let it be
that when I speak
beneath my word
another word is waiting

and when I breathe
another's breath is speaking.

18 December 2006

PLAY TWO

A man, any man no longer a boy, is sitting at a bare wooden table with a vase of dead and dying flowers on it, pale ones, whitish, mauve, pale corn, whatever.

The man no longer a boy is wearing a long overcoat. He sits with his right profile visible to the audience, he leans on the table, his left forearm resting along the edge.

He is cold. He is thinking: I am cold.

He is also thinking: when I was young I say like this too.

There have in fact been many times over the years that he has sat this way.

Only the flowers are different.

18 December 2006

= = = = =

What do you do
with what's in the mind
before the music comes?

the smell of a shadow
it said when I was quiet

or a piece of bread.
Enough a morning.

19 December 2006

12. K.414

In middle of things
the hunt
methodical a kind
of joyous plodding

hunt.
There is a king in your pocket
a moon on your back

and already it's dawn.
Who knows you?

Not what I see but what it makes me seen
or to have been seen, silently hailed,
two persons passing in and out of phase,
their shadows touch –

marvelous marriage!

tell me all
things lying in dead leaves
full of life, is that

is that what you were getting at
in a year of your life

the hunters stolid through the woods
their white hounds distracted
easily by truffles, bitches
mostly, under the leaf mould, under
such oaks by which a stag once bled

bratchet to call such dogs
and they are chosen out
to bark or bell in tune,

harmony animals

glisten of their teeth,
what are they after,
this posse, so quiet?

No bear no boar no deer
and the trees stand close
marshaled it is no thrill
to gallop through

still they keep coming
could they be after me
and if they are or do
who is this me supposed to be?

I look down and count my legs
I look up and count the sun

timeless error to be me
they're taking their time about it
but never stop
I pray to them but the trees absorb all sound

the king's out of my pocket now
running for his life

woodpecker, mountain stream, campfire ashes cold.

II.

Not so never here

hands cupped around your face
skull ears

your hear their skin

your lips move slowly
you followed the finger
pointing words out in a book

bright clean fingernail
shows your breath where to go

pronounce this sentence

then try to remember it
the name of the one you need
is hidden inside it

the one you need to need

inside the sound of what you see

I have given it all to you
her name her hawk
her tower her little yellow car

she who once in Anatolia
was the mistress of such beasts
lives near you now

now it is squirrel only or flying
fox and bat because you
are only who you are at night

and here the sun comes over the summerhouse
he must have been the loneliest man who ever lived
so hard he had to work to say the simplest thing

I hear you you belong to me

but with no you and no me
the shadows would still come crashing through the trees

it goes on without me

to be wonderful the only

III.

it has no heart here
it locked it in a golden chest
in a tired garden

story books tell what giants do
and smaller monsters like me and you

what happens inside the earth
and there too the giants hide their wits
and we hide our desires

come out come out
empty head with ruby rattling in it
word moving

and let the new religion come
sunbreak over little hill
we speak another language here

they are resplendent
in their silken mistakes

heirloom vocabularies
lady I would be a word in your mouth
he said and no other commodity
be our community

or a phone call from the weather
just the sound of the wind
breathing when you answer

just the sound of sun.

And in the backyard you can hear the cloud.

19 December 2006