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16. K.451

Her voice is the same as his voice
said the tree I feel it in my limbs
my body crawls with information and

Just and. All the rest
is things trying to sing, stuff
trying to mean.

Hylomorphic symmetry,
things trying to make sense
perfect but alive
the way a whole sky fits into a lake
always anxiety to say more.

More. The ripple
runs through you,
not the spine
that common highway
but through the subtle
strange and devious
pathways,

meat is made of undergrowth
sly asides, massacres and touch,

trust, that's where the signal runs,
politics *is* physiology,
look at any Vatican
and feel inside your skin
— but skin is just the beginning —
the organ tones of someone doing business,
selling the clouds, buying your time
with the smell of roses,

o Christ what a mystery
it is to be alive at all.

& then, my gorgeous little ampersand
with your cute bottom you
impersonate the next obligation in my job

and we agree to call it love, love,
since what else is there to talk about

it all comes back
to the simple minute underneath the tree
when you and what you see
turn out to be two

can't blame that on the snake
and the sky swells out above the lake
and nothing fits any more,
sobbing gentlemen sit in shadow
scratching their stubble and write the bible

there has to be a record of these early days
when dualistic –hence impure– vision first arose
when everything went on inside
and only later spilled, slopped out
over the rim of the cup

the way the sky (I'm sorry
to keep boring you with that blue tune)
slips out of the lake at last and runs away

night, stars, mist, and we
call this behavior a child

'not paying attention'
and slap him once or twice
not too hard the way
the branches slap against
each other in wind
a slip or slap here or there
and he really doesn't mind
do you?

II.
Around a round building
build a round pyramid
of fertile stone
what could it be

Fuse
my shadow to your body—
that's all the alphabet
is every asking, like Spain,
seductions, Carib vistas,
driveways paved with shells
crushed white Atlantic
sunlight all those lives
crunch under my feet
and you blame me, calling
me your desert island.
But I am house. Build
your house of me.

Name some more little countries,
I have to struggle against your tenderness,
that dinner made up of nothing but dessert.

But there is an idle island where it is bare
where birds are the secretaries of the sky
and scribble nonsense on the sand
while they scream into their airy phones
on their eternal lunch break, shadows,
and we walk among their doodles, shadows
ever changing, but our business, duty even,
is to make sense of it, become
rabbis of it, lowly members of their parliament

o let it someday get so quiet
the mind is forced to listen to itself
and leave the girls alone.

III.

No matter how far from folk I fall
the folk stuff always talks—
ham sandwiches or caviare
your belch is just the same, is you,

the root is in you, you are the folk,

the whole folk, the lore,
the time at sea, harvest
and lost property, umbrella upright

shoved in a rice field, train
and truckle bed, lascivious clergymen
and an old red bull leaning on the rain,
be reasonable for once, you can't

get away from where I am.

For many make me.
Every kiss a thousand marriages.

It has to mean something, it keeps moving.
It nears us of each other, you mean me,

we are the marriage bed of primitive vocabulary
we are the pebble in the flour

sift, sift, till we are sifted
through sunshine and through rain

till death comes hobbling towards us
and because I am so many

I run away in every direction
and outwit his compassionate fumbling

bone fingers on my rusty doorknob
and still he forgives me every time.

23 December 2006

17. K. 453

How can I hear you
when I know your name

things too close
appear to be on fire

sly wind
uncertain sound

they walk around like mirrors
you want to take a mallet to them

but when one thing breaks
everything breaks

a hand

“the things we think we see or mean”
it said in my dream and so I said it too

a leaf is when no one listens

sky is when someone is gone

The children break their mirror
now each one has her own

the closer you get to the mirror
the more you leave out

bend around the seeing part
a branch of pliant amber
strophes of seeing, turns
towards the light and towards the dark

In the first part of the first part
seeds fall out of the sun
sun stands in the sky where it rises in winter
but it is warm

when there are enough contradictions
men fall in love with women
I cannot say how the reverse of this may occur,
the only time I ever was a sky it was night
a clear night in January
and all I could see were the unknown
lights in me
that kept us both warm,

the brittle names of heaven,
and forgot to look at myself in the looking glass

but maybe night has no mirror.

The irritating thing about a flute
is a flute always sounds like somebody loving you
and you don't know who it is
and you're not sure you want their affection
let alone the intimacy their sound proposes

so you run to the doorway
and keep opening and slamming the door
and everything is still there outside
but for once you have said what you wanted to say.

II.

A page of wheat
Black Sea
history has its habits

I liked those masses when they skipped the sermon
all that parsley to be left on the plate

now I want to tell you though
what all those sermons said:

There is a word
that spoke itself

and wise women sit around and listen
to teach their sons and daughters to
go out and measure it
and while they're at it
go measure where the shadow falls

then break something
and cry your way home
holding the pieces before you
and the tune of your sobbing
is all we'll ever know
of what you found and how long
it was or deep or color,
did it have color, or was it
something on the other side of seeing?

Only when we listen to each and every one of us
can we hear what the whole word said Amen.

This here no sermon,
this skin. This
is not even something you hear.
This is pure waiting
pouring into and out of the ears,

old habit, old winter sunshine—
fortress ravelin, sad soldiers struggle up
but there are no defenders here, no cannons.
All my life I've spent
besieging a deserted city.

But that too is something you infer—
from the quiet sunshine you knew how far.

III.
I will not be sad.
We don't all waste our lives
but everybody could have done more.

Drinking song and then to sleep
and then wake up and know
you just missed something the sun said.

Wielding white and black paint such
as to suggest color where they meet,
color from no color born,

color is contradiction.
Gold on my finger warms my knucklebones,
all I am is what I feel.

The world never seems bigger
than the culture we see it from
and then we go up in a plane and size is born,

*the size of what you want
is always smaller than what there is,*

every surface is infinite
if you wander it
and that's where love comes in

like the Austrian cavalry
bright-tunic'd through beech trees
hunting you down,

feel me or die,
feel me, no matter how fast you run
the shadow of my sound will get there before you

and you will sink down exhausted
into the being I make you feel

even if you never feel it
it is the contract with the earth you signed.

24 December 2006

= = = = =

Music, the most present, insistent yet fugitive of the arts, is made up of all the as-ifs in the world. As if this were me speaking to you now. As if this sound that you welcome – reluctantly or eagerly makes no difference—into the fleshly doorway of your mind, as if this sound could come in and be at home among you all and stay. But it is gone before you can turn around and make such gestures of hospitality as you might offer an attractive or repellent stranger, Music tells you: Lock the door! But it is already too late.

(December 2006)

RECITAL

There is a section in the music where they speak some other language. The cloak room. The blue pilaster almost to the ceiling. The chattering nurses looking for an apartment but nothing find. Death, but no disease.

(late December 2006)

= = = = =

Know me
I am no one

hear me
I am silent

something flies above me
I am the shadow

of a shadow
squeeze my hand.

(late December 2006)

HINDEMITH

Music hurries slowly
through woods and over stones

stones still stained with shadow
from when the light passed by.

December 2006

= = = = =

Bare trees against winter sky
sunset. All the books are written there.

XII 06

LOVERS

But were they intimate.
A radix. *Spielmann*
means sort of minstrel. Menu
means what's ahead.
Mild weather. Organdy
curtains over open coffin
gauzy feel of recent dead.

I am the last one. I am
the certain. Behind me
the thousand spokesmen cluster
singing their parts in Mahler's
Eighth. The dead voice me.
I live their senses.
They come back in me
to inspect the world they've made.

Hradcany Castle. Meadows
this side of the Cam
where courteous children
punt. And in Savoia
a woman sells the cheese
she and her goats made.

So things really do speak.
They speak me,
I stumble like the falls at Schaffhausen
I spread out too wide
it takes me forever to reach the Dutch Sea.
But when I do there is
another there dressed like
an island or a nun
teaching children Old French,
a wolf or something
howling not far off. The woods.

24 December 2006

18. K.456

Ice rime frost *canities*
hunting weather

to where it rises

everything comes out of the woods.
Carl Ortwin Sauer disagrees,
everyone comes from the shore—
we are littoral:
from coast moved inland
only where river let us, led us.

Aeneid shows the pattern,
Book VIII, upriver, ascend.
Into the ever woods. The woods

are where we're bound
to be born. The white
sow and the brown boar.

Incest. We lied, we said we were wolves.

And so the morning was.

All this waking up, noble
touching, caring one another,

so much such.
So much it hasn't started
yet the familiar

silences. The familiar silences.
Now you know Bernini's aesthetic
the bronze church and the marble shoe,

you know the sunshine
carved out of oak wood,
dangerous polished stairs

stars in every window
as if it were always night.
Or Santa Maria della Salute

as if nighttime never came.
Bloch's Berlin. Sauer's Berkeley.
The long streets. Nothing holds us.

Only the *sentence* leads us to one another,
the distances, unspoken, the blue flash
from the welder's torch, a carved pineapple,

learn this dead language, darlings,
stand up tall and learn your opera.
This is my last gospel: turn

everything into some sort of kiss.
Now I'm lost. I couldn't have meant
something as simple as that,

could I, a crow on the lawn,
perhaps I did. Let me count my fingers,
fit them to all the keys,

keyholes, shinny up the flagpoles,
get stuck in the sky, never come down,
a lesser number, something between 2 and 1,

dim in midday, still give a little light
come dusk, when the herdsman stumbles
over the bull skull by the gorse bush and groans.

II.

Around, um, around,
arm around, um, I'm hard to see,
arm around arm around tumble from
woods in ground mist risen, a bell
jingles as if one of the dead before me
were getting a phone call down there,
I can almost speak the sad words
the little song proposes to the mind,

silly sincerity of the machine
I see the dead soldiers
stumbling through the woods
Ambrose Bierce's story
the child sees only the aftermath
men with bleeding feet
lost in the trees. I try to think,

try to think of something else
but everything turns into war.
It is Christmas morning, even the music
permits it, in the book it says
When the whole world was at peace
at Bethlehem in Judaea the Christ was born,
But the name of the book is Martyrology
and he will never be born again.

The cellphone rings, or the Carolina wren
suddenly back or not yet gone
winters with us and has something to say
recognizable, appearances around us
are still comprehensible, i.e., permit
sentences to be composed about them
the mad mind of the listener somehow
deems coherent. Only fear makes us believe, Spinoza said,
and fear aborts valid inference say I. Dare we pray
in a dumb church called Can't hurt, might help?

III.

Doesn't have to be anything
just has to be.

No argument,
serenity.

Swallowing reflex disturbed
in certain neurological conditions.

Circular reasoning. In war
poinsettia. Named

after someone. Candle, canticle,
Africa named for sunshine

like the apricot cooked by the sun.
In schoolyards the little boy

kicked and punched continues
to die. Big surprise.

Where do I go now

now that I have lost the shadows

you entrusted to my care
and where

with sun always in my eyes
and midnight always an accusation

I can claim *My father*
did this to me

but look what I did to my father,
I was and I am and I am

look at the insistence with which I insist
I am no one and nowhere and don't listen to me

do you hear me, stop listening,
all I ever meant was music

and you have that already
look down in your lap

from the heights of Parnassus
where we always are

climbing breathless up a level plain.

25 December 2006