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MOURNING

Philip Lamantia died yesterday. My last link with André Breton, with Fulcanelli, Schwaller de Lubicz, last link with the Benedictine Aztec priests, last link with the Tarahumaras. Such a poet.

What is it that I am mourning?

That poets die? That this one did, among so many?

That I will die?

Or that I will lose my link with those who went before?

That in losing them I will lose the world they made, which (sometimes I am afraid) is the only world in which I make sense.

Among so many deaths
the measure, meaning, of mourning?

Why does mourning sound like morning?

Does something begin when their life ends?

Is that what mourning is supposed to mean, or do, renew?

Mourning is letting go
slowly, is pretending we have a choice
and understand the choice

so we choose to let him go
the one who is already gone.

We talk about it
as if there were something rich or fine
to be gathered from his absence

as if by *consenting* to it
(with music, with a lot of words)
we could extract the jewel
from the dead body

from the gone.

The jewel of absence.

Mourning deprives death of its edge,
its finality. Mourning talks big
about another life, other meetings,
other rivers, rememberings, recognitions,
presences.

Mourning disguises absence as presence –
the absent body makes real tears flow.

Mourning tries to turn loss into something found,
a subtraction into something terribly *more*.

Mourning denies the dead man the reality of his departure.

Mourning keeps the living from thinking about their own impending
death.

But from thinking of that death, and only from that,
an imperious energy can arise
to marshal life force and give aim to days.

Herr, lehre doch mich

Dass mein Leben ein Ende haben muss
Und mein Leben ein Ziel hat

sang Brahms, where “the Lord” could be the name of anyone’s dead friend.

[9 March 2005]

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How many not dead anymore
a celebration of where they went
no where they move from and who
they met an angel is *connecting*

is this mourning deuil or a bevel
edge of cut glass table catch
the light refraction and reflection
blend an angel is *fusing*

confusing and infusing and perfusing all
scatterbrain messiahs listen
with the soles of their feet ascend
the mountain of noon an angel is *time*

stubble of laughter a flock of lovers
hidden in ash trees an auditorium
of tree yoga branches break a hush
of footsteps in underbrush an angel is *arrival*

coming and keep coming the sun
just one more apple elm a river breaks
shatter sky and hold my mother paw
a word wakes up in you an angel *speaks*.

10 March 2005

“To cut the string that ties her to the moon.”

—Nathalie Shapiro

December politics all moan and why.
March weather built of broken glass.
No calendar believes me but I am
come back from the dead unpersuaded
of death hell rebirth or even that voice
that told me hey come back again.
I am where I fell and who can help me.
It is a day of mourning, forget the paper,
all the news is on your skin, let me lick you
the back will do, the back of your hand
will do, my lick disguised as a Vienna kiss
or wherever the engines of old trains
drag unwilling settlers across the permafrost
this kiss finds you, you think it's me
I think it's you but it's just the moon
deep in our wardrobe impersonating us.

10 March 2005

OSSIA

Waiting at the station
cruciform mosaic
middle period Mussolini
gilt of a god around
the blue square halo
of the devils for devils
have a halo too
foursquare since the Devil
is the lord of numbers
the train is in *ritardo*
nobody knows where
while the saints
have nice yellow haloes
like lemons haloes
that are numberless
unitary pale the monad
in whose light we see

this monad light
comes listening to me
let the light hear
the *thing* we try to be
when we say here we are
waiting for the train

house of cards
ace of hearts
you are my
upside down
new girl in town

we hear on the radio
I translate from the cross

saltire raised
as if San Andrea
over some phony
battlement as if
this really were
the place it is

it isn't. Every site
has lost its right.

11 March 2005

HERO

But who was his father on his mother's side?
So late in whose night by me a mayor
of a midsize town in the Midi
in March? I love the wind!

Winter music in among the tiles
spirit is a part of matter a kind of bone
translucent in river of the flesh
the ribbon in your hair so many stars
inside your roof and a fox below the granary
god knows why no hens are handy
and the copper bracelet rattles on my wrist

but noontime is a sword his work half done
he sees the blade of grass and reads
the squiggling Arabic of light along the road
as the dust rises and falls on the right hand

he knows it's time to start the slow descent
into the airports of the dark, that city
always over the horizon speaking god knows what.

12 March 200

Seeds In Gourd Rattle

I pray the sky
to read out loud
to me slow
the things that are most close,
late-blooming periwinkle say
such as we saw one Christmas Day
on a hillside north of here
blue crossy petals coming out of the snow

Tell Sun for me
I know she has
enough work to do but rest
a little while upon my lap
or between my knees
depending on the translation she consults

jittery with light she comes down to me.

12 March 2005

LAR

All these wonders begin to wonder
who let them into the theater
old hearts full of vegetable music
uncles even aunts yet one day I too
would fall in love and understand
flesh makes up for vapid harmonies
Salome, tanz für mich!
And I will give your naked escapades
even unto the half of my attention
the rest kept fondly fixed upon
my Need, that household god who comes
and stands looking at me in the kitchen
every morning all my life, before
and after the regime of so-called Love.

12 March 2005

=====

Capture a mood with a melody
capture a mind with a word

How do you capture a desire?
Walk through the woods of it

with birds in your hair
touching the trees to left and right.

12 March 2005

THE EVALUATION

Ten carat works just as well as fourteen does
because the ions of the angels fit right in
insupportably accurate all the time the horror
is our slackness *Schlamperei* said Mahler
meaning the way we get into the habit of habit
and farewell edge, edge thou most precious

and that gold has no matter how alloyed with
thee and me and all our discarded amoretti
the drinker's breath perfumes the martini
keener than wormwood

...12 March 2005

=====

say so) when or anybody

Taurostercometer. say so) when or anybody
fills your ears with

listen to me) be. Be.

No cause or no Clausewitz. Don't bullshit me.
Spiritual principles,
loss on the found.

A spare document waiting to be lost.
Then read)

tlax. plam. fhim. ltsas,

chlorine. Vocalise.
Ssssssssalt.

So when say anybodies say say
whatever hills you up with hearing

plus, tlas means weatherland,
what earth what happens

home.

... 13 March 2005

THEORY OF HISTORY

You can't. Or understand
soft pages of a Thirties book
full of tennis feats and money
not yet in dire straits.

Tom Collins. Because
mindset follows a decade
behind the Nasdaq. I still
am eating, ergo Escoffier.

We live in dreams. Successful
people never wake up,
alas the poor red-eyed poets
at the rim of things
should swallow sleeping pills
like Rossetti's chloral hydrate
or valerian will keep
your cat mind busy while you sleep.

Zzz. That's where the best
chance is, reverie and consequence,
grandeur and ambition
of the sleeping soul. That's why
rich men's sarcophaguses
look the way they do, all outside
and no inside, smooth marble
like remembering a dream.

13 March 2005

EDGE

I said
and a few
flakes dropped along
the maple trunk
otherwise I couldn't see

the sky always has the edge on us and why.
Tell us these things,
noble Parachutist,
explain how up beyond the single molecule of light
there is a single atom of something else
and who she thinks she is

to let it snow or such
and us
to build cathedrals and fast cars
and memorize other people's epic poetry.

What does she think is going on down here
and will it work?

Will light one day go home
and leave us in the dark garage,
is there another story written
on the other side of the dead leaf?

13 March 2005

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Afternoon walk at Clermont
scarce to see
the river
is somebody else.

Clatter on sunlight down the road
snow nibble at the roots
tracks down to the stream
but not yet up.

Where did it go.
Crows eat below the snow.

14 March 2005

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Dark cunning: drag
the disconsolate widow
under the shower, cheer her,
wash her through her clothes.

14 III 05

Robert Kelly

FOR WALT WHITMAN, A TOWNSMAN OF MINE, AN
IMPREGNATION OF HIS SWEETEST POEM

When I wanted to learn when poetry happens
and what good it does in cities, Death's own greenhouses,
or in the army's killing fields, *I heard* a voice
left over from my childhood
when I still believed *the* things I *learn'd*
were true and I wanted to be an *astronomer*, an alchemist,
to summon friends out of the sky who would come to me,
when I hungered for *the proofs* of love
revealed in how *the figures* of desire behaved
who *were ranged in columns* of women and men *before me*,
when I was shown the beautiful entanglements
of the ordinary, words you could trip over,
how you could drown in maps and sea *charts and*
climb up the *diagrams* of geometry *to add, divide and*
actually make love with angels I could try to *measure*
while I tried to make *them* aid me,
when I saw them *sitting* there above the world
and *heard the astronomer where he* busily *lectured*
in my heart *with much* confidence
about the eternal animals aloft that feed on all our dying,
our death rattles sound like *applause* to them,
while we *in the lecture room* of cathedrals praise them —

how soon I lost faith in my gematria,
all the tricks, the *unaccountable* chemistry of fear,
failure, *I became* suddenly just a plain man trying to talk,
tired and sick but telling the truth, *till* the moon was *rising*
and gliding over the rooftops of Brooklyn, *out* over
the wooden water-towers of Manhattan, I loved
them, those stalwart minarets of the only true religion,
on every roof! old wood, old water,

I wander'd off by myself,
in all that was left of *the mystical*, the ordinary *moist*
night-air that all of us, woman *and* man, easy could breathe,
breathe and breed and tell the truth *from time to time*,
I let myself be one among the ones around me,
let myself touch and be touched, and if I had a word
I gave it to you, you all around me, the ones who *look'd up*
and saw me standing in front of them, gibbering
and spouting my poesy, seeming to have something
of portent to tell them, some word that was *in perfect*
marriage between them and myself or myselfes,
whoever I thought myself to be at that moment,
but instead of hearkening they would turn in *silence*
and smile *at* me and touch me lightly on the lip or the hand
and with their whole arm point tenderly upwards
saying Brother, Lover, those are just *the stars*.

14 March 2005

Note: When in 1950 I heard Norbert Wiener lecture on cybernetics and the transcendence of human intelligence, heard him in the very precincts of the Brooklyn Philosophical Society where Whitman had heard the learned astronomer in 1865, last year of the War, I knew I had to deal with Whitman's poem I had just gotten to know, deal with coming out from the lecture, coming out into the world of the human, coming out into the stars. I thank Olivier Brossard for summoning me to fulfil an obligation I had left neglected for half a century.

The present text inveigles words of my own, to say my own confusions, into Whitman's text, without changing at all the order of his words (printed here in italics). The reader is free to discard all my words, and readers who do so will be left with the pure Whitman text, fresh as ever.

=====

Owls fitted with devices
flit through my metal dreams
chasing me down, I am small
in there, dreamland the blue,
where the grey people move
like dust on oily engines
slow slow slow. Only owls
otherwise, fitted with small
transmitters beaming noise
into my pineal region I
am constrained to understand
as messages, images, girls
wandering barefoot in ink
I guess from the way my
breathing goes, or is it mine
and not the breath that
sleeps beside me dreaming
always owls of her own.

15 March 2005

Note: First line from a EuroNews report this morning about satellite tracking of bird movements.