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PLIGHT

No matter how splendid the building you build, your enemies will make fun of it and your friends fail to understand.

Every work, every text, is a trace left in the future. A mark stretching out into the unseeable. A gift for some future reader, perceiver, understander. When Stendhal inscribed his book *To the happy few*, he was giving it to the understander to come.

That is the trouble with language. Language is always of the moment. No matter how I speculate, extrapolate or just make wild guesses, I can't write in the language of the future. I suppose I can influence it (or, to be fancy, even create it) by what I write in the present, but I cannot write in it. I cannot write the future speaks. *I do not know what these words now will come to mean.*

Put these two paragraphs together and see the plight of poetry. It is written by the living for the not yet born. Which is to say: it is written by the dead for the living, in hopes they will still, tomorrow, understand the language of the dead.

Language change comes 'like a thief in the night.'

A thief who leaves gifts behind.

20 July 2004

TIME RUNS

different in here,
a word, a word falls
into a pool
surface
of the water hears it
shivers

meniscus little moon
month
measures a coming
a becoming
speak.

20 July 2004

Because a word is something a body does,
a word does.

The water shivers at the vibrated air.

We are molecular.

=====
there is choosing
how far to follow

what you can say
can always become

true later
morning luster

lasts all day
the not- x is also

not- y
we are free

isomers of the obvious
Paul said

first born of the dead.

20 July 2004

INVESTIGATIVE LOVEMAKING

Here is a great secret

the Double Helix, besides being a
description of the actual array
of bio-genetic information
is also an apt metaphor/description
of a larger state of affairs
that is, our now-familiar Double Helix
itself forms one strand of a more complex
double helix,
the other strand being the Dark Double Helix
of psycho-genetics.

Because everyone that lives has two genetics,
two geneses.

One is the now-familiar Mendelian genetics
the codes of which are newly read
(if not 'solved').

The other is the Psychogenetic Code—
one strand of its double helix is karma
and (here I'm guessing) the other strand
is the psyche:

the psychological information embedded
during the current lifetime
(a catastrophism theory finally finds a home)—
into the ancient unalterable karma strand
is interwoven a catena, a chain

of historical, mental events –
time comes into eternity
(as for the Christians,
with Jesus's birth eternity comes into time).

There are those skilled in reading
the karmic code of a being
(this is the lama)
and those skilled in reading
the psychological code (the analyst).

Two becomes three.

The two that are four
are read by the three that are more–
biologist, analyst, priest.

And only the first and last of these
dare to make predictions.

And the karmic code has four letters too: A, L, I, E –
aversion, craving, ignorance
and benign compassionate emptiness.

20 July 2004

=====

But there is a voice here

italic as marble

answering silence

with a taste like meat

so many animals I will not eat.

20 July 2004

<late:> =====

Renewals.

The world by sharing
new.

Substitution in Islam, *badaliya*,
Massignon's 'order' of it,

the only certainty
is substitution,
you live by my feeling.

The log does not feel pain.
And pain does not feel
the unyielding sureness of a log.

The next morning I woke up thinking:
I am built to oy their tragedy.

20 July 2004

(last line in fact dreamt)

=====

To have kept the right count
to have gotten to the tall pine wood
before the city, a swoon
of the natural before the simpler
design, or all those human
simplicities interweave a complexity
more intricate than nature's
weave. I am an animal of it.

21 July 2004

CLAUSTRO-

A different kind of rapture
patched together from earlier targets –
a horse trotting through rain,
a girl sitting on the taffrail,
blue methane flame on the landfill burnoff,
everything is careful in a sailor world.
Wind and sun make bright things
wink messages, and we are hostages
of what we think. Morse maybes.
A horse is very large, I'm scared of him.
I have claustrophobia, doctor,
narrow places make me panic, prisons
terrify me. Do you think it could be
that you project on spatial situations
a sense that you are trapped in your life?

Imaginary quotation:

“People who have no one are afraid of open spaces. Likewise, we will find that the claustrophobic – and no one is born with that affliction, it is always of adult onset – is someone who has, seemingly willingly, accepted a number of duties and responsibilities that he perceives as constraints and obligations. The claustrophobic consciously ignores this, but lives in steady denial of impulse, and finds in narrow spaces and closed rooms the perfect images of his own behavioral restrictions.”

21 July 2004

=====

To be small about it
and let be
as if the woods knew most of it
and you knew the rest

all it takes is silence
to let the two knowings
conjugate the truth
then let them fall silent too.

21 July 2004

Meditator's Mistake:

Waiting
in a timeless world.

21 VII 04

=====

Catch the light

before it falls

or everything we see

is ruin

lovely traces

of a long ago catastrophe

21 July 2004

=====

The phone is ringing in the trees
the wolf is calling
to see how her children are
in such a land

Live in a country (she says) with more sheep than men
and all your daughters will be priestesses.

21 July 2004

=====

Walking along, I found an immense carpenter's nail. I picked it up and gave it to Massignon. He said, "Why this nail?" I said: "To pierce your heart." He put it in his pocket.

Mary Kalil's memoirs

1.

make me an offer

let the blue outrageous mothers

start again

let the blue outrageous soccer moms

stop worrying about the orange children

me, my skin is copper –

not copper like Indian or Polynesian or Black American,

real copper, like a bowl or the shiny wires

that feed signals to your TV

and o what strange signals you waste your life receiving

theory, the theory, the old, the story,

can it listen to me now, this sound of grace,

the luminous Precepts the gods have left

all over this scant pergola

2.

copper faced but made of marble: a man.

I read a little and travel as little as I can.

The nail you gave me I still keep in my clothes

robes trousers coveralls post-impressionist's smock

my cassock my soutane, I lay tfillin with it,

binding the nail to my biceps with a belt

a sailor gave me once when he had no other coin

and I stick a burning candle on my forehead

and pretend to lead you through the wilderness by night

in the morning I'm just like everybody else

If we observe sin, it means that we participate in it, and in that particular kind of sin. Does a child condemn profligacy? He cannot see it. That which we observe, we have some share in.

–Priest Aleksandr Yelchaninov

21 July 2004

VIRTUE

1.

Come to know matter
like the doctor come
to cure your mother

we thought the earth was sick
because we couldn't see the stars
and the sand was moving

but only our own virtue was at fault.

2.

This word is wonderful—
a moral aptitude, a piety
towards other people,
a piety towards things

from which strength comes,
the virility that achieves.

Virtue makes things happen.

Virtue heals your mother's wounds

and grows the August wheat.

Virtue makes you love
the one beside you
in the bar or in the bed.

virtus, moral, physical, psychological efficacy, the quality of the hero.

But first learn what to do and what neglect—
at long last you will know by the effect.

22 July 2004

CRY

What kind of commentary
does the blue jay need?

22 VII 04

=====

Rabbinic students trim their nails
close to the quick they told me
because demons lurk inside the fingernails,
make the hand move beyond the will.

Print to the edges of the page, then,
leave no empty space.
Nothing is more fertile than a margin
for lazy commentators

dreaming on their forearms
slumped across the desk
while demons with crow quill pens
inscribe their neat seductions.

22 July 2004

=====

We were walking in the forest. Your name was Eve. It was raining. We were very wet. These were English trees, nothing vast, just the little woods still left here and there. It was midnight, and we could see well enough to walk. There was a stone wall we were walking towards. Every now and then I could feel your wet hair against me. Your eyes were as blue as shadows in moonlight, but there was no moon. I don't know how we saw so well, but we could see each other perfectly. Soon we would reach the wall. What then?

22 July 2004