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juIF2002

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Re: Meyer

So it isn't images but *evidence*
that makes poetry
stubbornly wantonly true

I think this after reading Tom Meyer's magnificent "Book II"

Poetry like this returns us to the frightened, excited (and fear is excitement) adolescence of poetry, when everything that happens as we read seems to be exactly about our own lives, the specific details of our own desires.

17 July 2002

ARCHITECTURE

too many bricks
to build a wall

the architect
has too many workmen
too much sand

he still needs to coax
the hummingbird
to shiver down
her patterning shadow
so he can trace it
and begin

how can he interest her
in such dry work?

he makes the workers
play flutes and whistles
bothering the air

music is the sound of hope
but it's all his
hope isn't it, not hers

the bird demurs
the temple even now
ready to claim

this pile of matter
their empty old-fashioned
waiting hands.

18 July 2002

PLAYING BY THE RULES

What are you left with when the music begins?
I don't know, what was I wearing when I came in,
you were looking at me, don't tell me you weren't,
I know my colors, I wasn't paying any attention
to myself with all those famous buildings in the room
escapes from microbreweries trying to limbo
and ladies from the Altar Guild practicing aikido,
just feeding peaches to sulky armadillos in the gents,
I didn't understand the name of the group that's playing
and the name is 96% of what music means, you know,
I don't know, and why do they call it a group when it's
only a single noise coming out of a machine, you mean
you remember music when it just fell out of the air?
My grandfather told me there was such music once
hidden in the island up in the bayberry maquis
he crawled around the wilderness and thought he heard it
sighing in the bushes, he wrote it down but it washed off
in sweat, those were the days, when people still wondered
where has our love gone. We woke up and it was morning,
that's where it went, we went back to the office, testing
diseases on little furry animals. Do you think I'll be famous
if I wear this sweater, or better if I take it off. Fuchsia.
The answer is published every day before the closing bell.
Appetite is aptitude, that's what I really thought I knew. And why
are there always two people talking and one of them is always you?

18 July 2002

CONTRADICTION

When all is said and done
nothing
has been said
but everything is done.

18.VII.02

ANATOLE

Again this hot morning
a cool breeze
suddenly from the sun
speaks through the trees

the reciprocals
things carry in themselves
as if a universe
of considerate delight
hides behind the ordinary

all the people I am
must wait their turn
but finally do have to speak

how many am I?
count the words

I belong to hearing
what they let me think

sometimes we all
try to talk at once
a motet built
into a bare sentence

unison effect

romantic appetite

as if meaning

I mean these voices

exhausted birds

find a bare tree to roost in

one whole night.

18 July 2002

TO THE READER

This ink that gets my fingers filthy
makes no mark on your mind.
What bad ink I must be using.

18 July 2002

ROBERT

Somewhere, after the irises are finished
and the purple hostas start their show
this half-acre is mostly grass and shadow

and here I find myself most at home,
time's jealous ogre, wanting it all for myself
even if all is hardly anything,

be content with pieces of wrapping paper
I can pin to *my heart's content*
all over the asylum walls

for my heart is one content with surfaces.
Let others analyze the inner cubits of experience
and find out how long it takes love to fall

down in the endless chasm of the father
as if it were an iron hammer that fell.
Leave me with the play of sun and shadow

on my broad brown page
I can trace their outlines fairly well
and copy them on little sheets

easily hidden of white paper,
pretending they are actual words I mean.

18 July 2002

ONOMASTICON

Rachel is sheep and Leah is heifer

Susan is flower and Mary is bitter

Who do we think we are?

What desire animates
the names we choose
to give one another,
the helpless wordless infants
given their first word,

because it must be desire
that drives us,
 what do we mean,
what are we asking them to do
when we call them
fame-bright, twisted heel, likes to fight,
sheep soon pleased, cow never satisfied?

18 July 2002

DARK ROMAN

How are those blue
satin skies Grecian
plaintiff
of a hot night tort

so tried to answer
your announcements
ensue last night.
But need bizarrely

the suicide of discourse
just to breathe the air
— *aer* — was out when I heard
the gods are still amazing men,
where cancellation means
perfect truth in boyish wonder
we served, thinking of you,
every time comes through,
our one Heaven to talk again

can image
do it? am anonymous
to be able to
survive
mention's outing,

*so I thrive
and let myself endure
and be a heathen.*

18 July 2002

More room for bronze

It was
that all

and it made its way

north into the conclusion of human logic
signified by a tall nervous effeminate man making a long distance call in the dark

18 July 2002

ON THE DAY FIVE-TOOTH

Today I will meet someone who will show me the way.
Their hands will be happy, and after midnight
everything will feel like you again. I will be home
and that will be my way. While I'm busy sleeping
the sink will make plans with the stove
and there will be peace on the planet when I wake.

Today I will meet someone who opens the door.
Who teaches me to tie my running shoes and ride a horse,
be a train, fly to an undocumented island
hidden from the world by abstract nouns
through which only the faithfulest can wade ashore.

I feel surf on my ankles already, I find a sea stone
veined with mirrors and with chalcedony.
You are on the beach before me listening to birds,
over the wave crash you can still manage to hear
not far inland the wren's cry, victim bird, the king of time,
who teaches us to sing and hide.
But it's only from you that I know how to learn.

This is my authentic voice, this chatter
of undertow swishing through the shingle,
this rush and hush and leave behind
crimson personages in flaky pools,
how long will any of us live?
No guarantee seabirds will call our requiem,
black against the inquisition of the sun
a bird is just a silhouette that sings.

Someone I will meet today, succinct as bonsai,
nourished on psalms, focused as a pencil,
contemptuous of all comparisons, someone I will meet
because this is the day called Meeting on the road
someone who does something to your life
as I struggle, a comic book hero, to discover
the forgotten rules of the secret brotherhood I am.

19 July 2002

for Charlotte

THE WALK

Night seemed stricken with surprises, no one moved
around us in the trees, there seemed to be terror
in the smallest leaf, because this summer heat is really fear,
did you know that? We went out walking at midnight,
it was like trudging in a box uphill
against the weight of something really there,
something that wanted everyone to go home
where there are chairs and painted plates and arguments,
and decencies, decency. Not this muted horror
that passed through our little woods on its way to heaven.

19 July 2002

LE PROPHÈTE

Go find some raindrops
and lead them here
the sacred dew is barely enough
to make my ink

and I need to wash my face,
I need to display myself
as the herald of plausible mysteries,
my face has to shine.

No Moses, I'm
still carrying a word or two
I picked up from rubble on the mountain—
a rule, an algorithm, a few don'ts

and many do this, do this for me's,

19 July 2002

A STONE FROM CUTTYHUNK

*What do you let me see,
shewstone & talisman?*

The road divides
a man with no eyes

a fox darts from the rhododendron
film this from above

and listen hard
a cave is opening
from which a red
spider crawls
leaving weblines
on the palm of your hand
forming a map of the moon

before there were any wars in heaven
that little week the moon still bore
a lake or two it had been born with
last Thursday when the earth gave birth

And do not listen to the sleeping child
whose big pre-frontal lobes
twitch with violent dreams

and kiss the nurse in her starched white
kiss her again and tell her dying

lasts longer than being dead, death
is just a little while
blink of an eye and you're busy again
in other uniforms, other spices

there is no medicine, in other words
only in these words, old stone
where the haloed Virgin
stands slender on smooth rock
and fraudulent businessmen cluster at her feet
now in the hour of their need
when all their lies have been found out,
can she forgive them? Can we forgive them?

Every lie deserves another.
But there is a country where every lie
serves the everlasting Truth.
I think that's what the Serpent said
to Eve the day after Eden,
when Adam pretended to be dead
and she pretended to be alive
and all of them are with us still,
the snake offering a kind of apology,
I think he really was right, but how to find
that country and discern its laws,
can he help us there, he who's so close to the lawn?

It's not certain in this lucid stone.
The hour glass is in my face already
and eel fishermen are up and stirring
on the Norfolk Broads, the sun
is up already and gone from this stone.

If you look at anything long enough
you see faces, if you study faces
you see everything else there is on earth,
it's all here on or just beneath the skin,
all the doctrines, all the entrances,
lies and fortitudes, a skull
is under every face. Even mine.
And one day I will meet at last
a face that says nothing at all.
That will be the day. Good weather for being gone.

19 July 2002

MATHEMATICAL: PROOF BY EXHAUSTION

What happens
when you write
the pen out of ink?
Is it like riding
a horse out of miles?
Or a seagull
runs out of sea?
How can there be
caught up in time
so much that has
nothing to share
with time at all,
so much to explore
in an alternative forest?
Christ, we rave
about other galaxies
and haven't even yet explored
the house across the street

where Adam was born
and Eve still lives
and the Holy Grail
stands in the china
closet not too dusty
and the children
sit around at five o'clock
dreaming of elsewhere too,

who are they, name them
one and all, gather them

into your heart one by one
until you know
the smell of their thinking,
the soft down of their identity
and everyone and everyone
and let that be glory
or the finished work
the so-called Opus
the world finally held
in the cool eye of accurate love

these folk now just waiting
for suppertime and daddy come,
when the newspaper
flaps in the door
to amend their thinking
with material lies,
images o images the touch
of sunlight slanting
sideways under the
clouds under the trees
the beams of saturated light
probing the objects
and configurations
proposed for our scrutiny,
the new science that light tries
futilely all these years
to make us master
before we dare to sleep.

19 July 2002

SAHELANTHROPUS TCHADENSIS

that's who it is

the original

answer-to-no-question

the father's father

the first one to taste death.

19 July 2002