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BRUSSELS, 6 AUGUST 2000. Sabena Flight 551

Only now after thirty years or more of doing it do I notice that my date-line, that begins every day's work in my notebooks, besides naming and blessing the day and indexing it in memoria (or what are words for), also has a certain old-time journalistic flair.

Imagine me every day of my life writing the article that says the news of my day. Now imagine the newspaper for which all these dispatches have been composed, day after day for forty years. Imagine this paper that has faithfully published them — sometimes front page, sometimes tucked under the list of drunk driving arrests on page 28, next to the funny thing that happened in Canada. *Etheric Times and Cosmos Gazette*.

“Quod scripsi, scripsi,” said Pilate, in one of the most mysterious passages in the New Testament. What I have written, I have written. And as he spoke it, he spoke with it the credo, not just of the poet/composer, but of language itself. What is written stays written forever. No matter now neglected, despised, rejected, lost, forgotten — what has once been inscribed stays written forever. And now grim that Pontius Pilate should have been the first recorded spokesman of that truth.

It is cool on this plane now, after the frantic airlessness of the airport (lucus a non lucendo, the port where there is no air), the preposterously long concourse with moving walkways only some of which actually moved. Frantic crowd trying to book onto this flight, an hour to board.

We are serene now on our plane. Stewardesses give us nice things, juices and newspapers in Flemish, French, German, English.

We are in the air now over Belgium, which looks like any green place in summer, houses and farms and far away.

So many places to go.

Let a time come when quiet happens
Blue face like a mandrill or a clown

A man I know tries to make everyone uncomfortable
He is accurate, funny and unpleasant

loud, boisterous and mean.

I was much admired in his native country for putting up with this man.

I thought: it's not that I put up but that I don't let him in.

To be bothered by his viciousness is to play into his hands

and become one more instrument of his self-destruction

that he patently desires to achieve in every social situation.

Social means: with people.

The stewardess knows just by looking at us what language to use. I fool her by

asking for a paper in German. Thereafter she speaks to me in German. But

the other stewardesses, not having heard that exchange, assess me rightly and

speak English.

Travelers have only a limited number of body types: slack (rare), tight

(common), and the between (occasional).

Nun muß ich Deutschland vergeßen

Und alles, was dort geschah.

Gärten und Rosen und

Wann seh' ich wieder die Nebelkrähe?

Berlin, your sky is a museum of Neuertumswissenschaft,

science of modernity,

Lüneburg Heath, you stretch out so long, all the way to the curved

palm of the pallid moon,

Hannover, your white horse keeps jumping inside me

O stop the music

loud is fascist

don't you know that yet,

into a brown room German goes

hurt of senses,

bombast of sound

that is where the brown-out starts,

when power's lost from the network of social interaction and art

the young drunk men get loud

Look who has opinions.
Look who is here (there)
falling over the farmer
in haste to the cow

in every barnyard
a heap of dung
this is not something
to write to the Times about

this is the way the machine
works, the cannibal
we are, the party animal
the planet turns out to be

on which we ride.
Beauty and art and all that queen
is pass and by and behind the door
I've got to start listening again.

The Prostitute's Story

(told by Mariette in *De Standaard* of 6 August 2000)

I could work in a clean straight, met me rare a pair between. In straight wore no man's last heap or van do prostitutey. I could nat met all bewunders an' see prating met me. Her is gain over last. The heal schooner muck is fully underwrecked. I could sit neat in one dovecote. So all's the missies in the Skipper Street. I could drag me so all's hot whored. I could do go on my work. Point out. For gain gelt for the world will I my steak roll in for a plastic sheen from the dry gay drug straights. It got a door feel, too heatsy and too aggressive into. The concurrency is way too groat. The manner wore up the prostitute door word be opened, stroked, meant met mine ethics.

We heaven oak ounce norm and armwriggles. A good air, breathwardy, prostitute respected die. She shall neat naked, of half naked, in her between pose errant.

So much for the day's Flemish.

One needs a different kind of load
To stow behind the horse
So that trot trot he carries it
Along the reliable highway map
To the Real World to hope is waiting
For you alone at the end of every flight

Into the turbulent city called Home
Full of thousands and thousands of people
Who want nothing from you
Except your body or your money
Thank God those things are so easy

We walk heavy on the earth
Because we're taught to walk that way
Lead official shoes to hold us down
Otherwise natural levity would lift and lift
And we'd have to build colleges in free fall
Where you could really learn
Undistracted by the peremptory
Challenges of gravity

Travel silences the mind.

6 August 2000
Brussels — New York

PLEURISY TODAY

Where are those diseases
That my mother dreaded

Old fashioned diseases,
Retro Death?
She feared them for us,

Pleurisy, scarlet fever,
Diphtheria (from which
She saw her sister die,

And saved her brother herself
Digging the proliferating
Membranes — *diphthera*—

Out of his throat with her hands
So he could breathe)
Rheumatism, walking

Pneumonia, grippe.
And pleurisy, that sounded
As bad as leprosy.

And where is that disease
Today I haven't heard in 40 years?

It is strange and almost terrible
To live longer than diseases.

6 August 2000
in flight

RUNNING UP AND DOWN THE AISLE

Travelling for hours in a large jet is like getting married
A wedding without the bride. Or groom, depending.
Endless fuss. Crowds. Touch.
A ceremony you don't really understand.

Can't move. Can't get away. They call it a dance.
Sometimes you find the toilet *nicht besetzt* and you go in
And shut yourself in privacy a tender moment

Four walls and you, just you,
That old-fashioned way to be alone.
Then back out among the wedding guests
Drunk on distance, fear, anxiety, exhaustion,

Who stumble with you around the cabin.
And babies cry and cry, that interminable
Prophecy of theirs that drives you mad with truth.

And long before the plane comes down
You notice they've stopped crying and Cassandra sleeps
And you miss them, miss them, you're alone with the sky.

6 August 2000
in flight

(after reading Kawabata)

When I read the small story
I learn how hard the heart
Has to work to understand itself,

Harder than a katydid on a hot night or
Wolf on bare tundra always hungry
Or a rabbi bent over the midnight Law

Because every hour of the day milks
Its own meaning from the written text
Released just then and no other time

To the student of the word if she listens.

7 August 2000
Lindenwood

with your pen I carve
writan means carve or scratch

proudly a new
word in the meek morning light of you

still sleeping a little
rain easy down home

7 August 2000

[for Phillip Nicolai, who wrote *Wachet auf*, and a poem in hexameters in which every word begins with C — *Certamen corvorum cohabitum columbis*]

An amorist among admirers
Aligns an astonishing azimuth
And addresses any available arrow
At authorities.

Anarchy achieved!
Age-old anxiety appeased
As aspiring authors amass anthologies
Agile as apsarases and accurate as art.

7 August 2000

You can never tell what a word will let you know

Edges and measures. The art of it, the still
Encomium of,

the silence of light

the great gift
 ever and ever renewed
if only we could greet it with a silence of our own.

7 August 2000

“...a silence of our own”

But what is own?

A pen you find in some café,
a bar of soap you lift in a hotel,
a coin in a fountain

only Cloacina knows, goddess of the undertow,
the floated off, the sucked away,
the undercurrent, sewer service, the brick intestines of our Rome,
the other end

and this also is her mouth.

In Titus's time they found an old statue of her
— we would call her The Recycling of All Things,
Queen of Greens,

Die Umweltkönigin,
Environmentula, the world's phallus hidden in pure flow.

7 August 2000

What the water means that marks the earth

I was staring at a weather satellite image of the region I live in. A clear day — there was the Hudson, great and lordly blue in the swathe of green hills and mountains, white clouds sailing in from the western Catskills. And everywhere the Hudson was being joined by larger or smaller rivers and streams. I was surprised at how much blue I saw. I never knew so many streams were there, right about me. Some of them I could name, most not. So I went to the road map, then the atlas, then the biggest atlas I could find — and in every case the rivers are not there, or only indicated as a faint blue line — one or two of them are named, the Wallkill for instance, but most not. There was no attempt to reckon or represent the abundance and magnitude of these affluents. And I asked myself why

don't they show water
on their charts.

It means to me
they are afraid of it,

afraid of what flows by itself,
catching heaven in its hands its legs its crotch spread

afraid of what comes down.
They are afraid of the subtle flexible insinuations of water
trickling down uncountable channels into the grooves
we see from our satellites from our planes, the silver
insistences through the landscape

a landscape that water makes.
And that's what they're afraid of, these roadmap makers,
They want to keep the highway habit in us, to run
on our little rails through the worldspace
as if nothing existed but our intentions

they want the map to show a world that humans made
towns roads reservoirs the names we put on things

and the blue lines fade out, we hide the history of flow
which has nothing to do now with what we value,

the history of money is standing still

in a place and owning the place. In a place and making
people pay to be there, to stand on their feet and sit down

while lewd water is flowing and flowing lewdly secretly always

wanting its own lovely way.

fraid of a little
water afraid of a swamp
marsh sump creek
arm of the sea rivulet
damp hole in the ground

scared of water
scared to touch
or be touched

water touches
everything it passes
colorless democracy of
your skin it knows

the men are scared of it
scared of a channel
that made itself

afraid of every power
that writhes to its own dance

scornful of laws

So that the small rivers and creeks are not shown on our maps,
in atlases even, and road maps, none of the fluent is shown

because the fluid is the sex of us, the wet of us, the cream on our skin
that comes from the sense of us, the in, the sin, the sleek
wet intensities of what does not obey any laws, not even its own laws,

it rises and falls, it comes by and goes. And that terrifies them,
the map men, the chartered geographers of our unstable condition,

because water is dirty, because rivers run through our bodies loaded with
everything we fear.

In the time of the kings the Romans found, already ancient, a statue
in the river, where the great city sewer debouched into the Tiber,
a tall statue of Cluacina or Cloacina, the Goddess of the Sewer,
the Goddess of the inferior mouth, the one who takes away what has already
given us its life and needs to go back to the dark to get more,

and they set her image up by the arched brick mouth of Cloaca Maxima

sign of every repressed delight, the hot bottom of the world
that oozes with everlasting juice,

and the map men are always afraid of her,
every stream belongs to her, every river is cloaca is her work

because a river, even the smallest river,
tells us we have not tamed the world around us,
it still shapes itself, and it tells us we belong to it, to everything that is changing
and hurrying and getting wet and filthy and clean,

we do not belong to ourselves.

O scandal of map makers erasing blue lines at midnight
a frightened lust still drizzling in their hearts.

7 August 2000

There is a kind of aspiration here
discontinuous like music buffering in net congestion
scrappy infinities of the heart's internet

attention span ludicrous forgetmenot
the only flower I can give is pay attention
it withers between us but the aspiration

flowers once and stands there dry or wet
to mean what I cared once to desire
all these universals driving one old car.

8 August 2000

rays out of our Seven Cities
in all directions spears
focused outward from the Lowest Gate

into the absorbing world
to find the goal
that Will proposes.

All this fluid matter
a turbulence in the heart of color
we suck to still pain,

be soothed, instrument.
I am made for you.
Use me as you would be used

delicate, with Saxon craftsmanship
along the unspeakable highways
that wander alertly into the interior.

8 August 2000

Reminiscences de la Landesgalerie de Basse-Saxonie, Hanovre.

Untoward principles
by ultra-saurian judex
nine millennia count as one
the Oilman's born we need

to shunt all dying to a glebe
or gladder track, presume
a sacred forestry blindworm
no less than antelope on

Lüneburger Heath saw I
one time the moon
that was my Roman poetry
spandex and lilies

by Arminius's rout constrained
settled into language
till the tongue was mine
and I became.

Raddled tarpits blur
of Galician blue
(o Lord thou art a Lady)
quincunx for the deserving, mind.

8 August 2000

obscure tower
a prayer to the Moon

more than half of you
in must's power

mist's pallor,
an ash in the sky.

8 August 2000

Now climb
a blue tower
in the back of your head

mausoleum
under cypresses
a letter turned backwards

to stand for past
present and to come
heaven help up

orphaned by every hour
the gaunt mime
still steals his flower

overdetermined,
a man instead of world.
Spain is this stone.

8 August 2000

Closely closely measure
Morecombe Sands bewilder
monks guide day travelers dry

I pray to the sun for darkness
I ask the woman for life
she is crouching on a dark staircase

there are living things all round her
ta zōa, in each of my mistakes
I am guided by apocalypse

so loved the world he gave
his own-begotten wine
I sue the foresters for light

everything is a tangle of forgiveness
but it is an arcane measurement
as by scruple a milk expressed

from sad green things my final mother.

9 August 2000

POLIZEI

can I learn to skip
between artful
pregnancy they
forgot me again
the system zygote
UNIX raspberries
tear from thorny
stems,
 be blunt:
the green policecars
akimbo plaza
Skins aplenty at
far end confront
break ranks for Woden
his sake who scans us
lovesquint from within

o Christ a man's
a leper at a woman's
window yearning in
bring out your glass
a meadow telescope
to prod the mutter
into deeper wordage
that hums the heart

o don't be so human
just hear the trinity
crushed fender one
Turk in the doorway
dying and love
somehow leaves a
rabble and sex
could still distract
maybe killers from the kill
while blond young

uniformed theoreticians
of free enterprise
in green fatigues
wield sidearms and
armbreak crowd
control devices like
scythe and billyclub

I am on the side
of the man on the ground
but don't want
to lie down there too
but stay up here
in the middle air
of politics where
thinking's cheap
and love alone
poses enough
delicate catechisms.

9 August 2000