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THAT IT MAY COME TO REST

1.

That it may come to rest
and be an apple, a miracle
the way hands work
tugging yarn snug on the loom

and cutting free. We have come
to the inside-out of myth

as if one morning suddenly
but normally enough, without a word
the river stopped.

2.

Last works
and lost words
a kind of triangulation
or a weather in the heart of number.

3.

If you show us your thinking
without a story
there is nothing to attend to

the mind has can do nothing with thinking.

The doors of the subway car
remain open an uncertain time,
brief time—

sitting there, can you tell from
who is getting on and who is
getting out which way you should go?

Examine, traveler, and sit still.

4.

Of course one has to go to Germany

that's where they keep most language
nowadays, on parade,
especially in the Lutheran parts
which look suspiciously at other arts
—philology alone is good for you—
and find painting colorless and sculpture barren.
Freilich muß man nach Deutschland fahren.

5.

Come rest
between permissions

these comforts
long denied you

now deserve you
rest after speaking

the breasts of silence

the milks are different,
their comfort mixed

silence inside words
or after them,

two orders of our declaration,
wild carrots, clover, ragweed, poetry.

6.

Elegant enough, a pastor visits his sheep.
On bike in a black short sleeve shirt with cleric collar
zipping matins-ward in morning dew
and you call this a Protestant?

We have so many names

nomina numina

to call,

call at going and at coming,

calling,

sheep bleat on the moor.

7.

And there is more. A barrage
below the Temple, a dirigible caught in some trees.
Dogs bark up at it as if the moon their god
had finally come down to earth
to them, to teach them language
(a sound goes through the mind before it speaks)

And the rabbits are Victorian!
And the airplanes with broken landing gear
rest crooked on the ancient lawn
and the world is over already
like a dream unpacking into day.

8.

Remember Isis. The night she lay
on the bed beside Thoth
chaste in the cheapo hotel,
a scandal beyond the reach of theology,
that they would dare to touch,
that they would do no more than touch?

What does it mean when to a small nowhere city
the gods come calling, jostling
and goosing people on the street, whistling, spitting
and walking nude their fawns in shabby parks,
splashing through the fountain under the mean
monument to the Confederate dead?

In doorways, racists gibber at such antic beauty.

9.

We were there. This is the throne. We sat
by turns on her chair. The chair
was made of water
and felt like knees when we sat down.

In sanctity we sat and read and ruled
and the afternoons stretched out at our feet and yawned,

in sanctity we ruled the little earth
and tried to coax all the laws
into one simple law,

Do Not Kill Anyone At All.
If you keep that, all the rest will keep themselves.

10.

Rest between renaissances.
Rest for marble and rest for gold

the Opels of tourists streak through rapeseed fields
in the magic Saarland twilight
where black soldiers study the rising moon.

11.

I crossed all those rivers.
I was born for bridges,
privileging crossing over,

really just wanting to walk in the sky,

in Newark or Kingston or Highbridge or over Humber
you can do it, one great gesture
so little motor people just like me can go
over sacred moving water,

and every one of them a goddess is,
Ryan / Rhine / Rhiannon,
and still Annan's self delves water's tale.

12.

I wear this cross around my neck:
sympathy for the victim
odd to show it by the mark
that tortured Him.
I wear these shackles round my heart
bone white, Adam's ribs.
Criss-cross, bare skin, well meant lie,
I raise the red flag in the cemetery.

13.

Investigations of an absent theme,

Sir Edward, this would be music
only if you listen, this would be meaning
only if you find (I can't) a theme
to hold this tune together,
I can whistle something that makes no sense
but still the wind is physical, is breath,
says me, means you, the wind is true,
fingers can still touch me and touch you.

14.

I had a theme
but lost it in Los Angeles
when a pregnant lady with a lisp
looked me in the eye

I had a theme once
and in India it got washed away
down the hillside in a soft monsoon
while I watched the gravestones say their prayers

I had a theme again and held it
warm in my mouth like a bite from a peach
so sweet and thick the meaningful, the juice
dribbled down my chin and chest
so everyone who saw me knew what I would say,
they laughed at me until I swallowed it

(nothing more crushing than agreement,
consensus silences all music)

I had a theme at last
a kind of shapely pouting silence
a bunch of word beyond my grasp
all I could do was say them so I did.

5 September 1993

ALONE ON A HOT DAY

...tacking

A few
words earlier
the sun
had not yet

but all of a sudden
lines on my palms

*

A little taste
like or soap or rain
enough
to change the day

*

Luddite appetite

esperance
and quiet woods
and noisy sheep and
bringing this to you
hand-made by mind

untaught unthought
we flower from no seed.

6 September 1993

HENRY JAMES

You go to him to understand
how the time passes
how it is supposed to pass
in scrupulous attention to the weathers,
all of them,
sky's town's heart's belly's skin's

necessities providing harborage
for strange new craft

look, on certain days you see
we almost have discovered a new world

not one like this last
made of pomp and outrage
on the bones of dead Mongolian émigrés

but the real America
the one the Indians were, I mean the
Hopi are still looking for.

2.
So American Literature
will discover the deep shamanic truths
of grassland and mountain and mine
when it pays exact attention to
a casual conversation in a bar
between equals or unequals, all the same,
we are the emblems of the actual.

Exact attention to the animal of time.

7 September 1993

Cambodia.

Three low trees spread
one above the other
like champagne glasses
waiting for a wedding
lift off for another
planet. They speak
French beyond the moon

but softly
so the night can't understand.
I unfold the leaves
and find our names.
A castle somewhere.
battlements, dawn.
It makes me think
all we ever will know
we'll know by color alone.

7 September 1993

[referring on, from Margaret Garrett Wolosoff's small painting]

the hallway that is a rose

—Norman Weinstein

Stumbling up
late night should
have been abed
hours back
like any prospering
Dickens villain
(bad men always keep good hours)
but there I am
on a plum colored
hotel carpet
with Victorian yellow flowers
and nothing in my hand
from one more reading
into the no
man's land I carry with me
no more Idaho
than the moon
why do we do it
we seek the hour
and one day one
day by the magic
built into
not the words but
saying them
out loud into form
(the *riff*) people
wake to one another
and from the dubious parlando
of all this endless tour
(so much of it spent

in that unknown country
we call home)
suddenly come into silence
together. From which
language is born
to be new. And the one
who met me at the train
is the same as forever.
Every wedding
thanks all of you
who speak the language
we slept.

8 September 1993

[Thanking Norman Weinstein for the wedding poem he wrote us this
summer, from which the title comes, a line snapped off its branch.]

CINEMA

Exiguous, waiting
for a table in an old country
this has been me
often enough
by the shambles in the monastery
where the monk hacked meat
off the leg of a dry old cow
to feed a thousand
and do it well

there is a movie in it
in everything
we ever see
why do all the ones we make
look like all
the ones we saw
not what we see?

8 September 1993

Then amaze me
by the insolence
of your recall,
the midnight depots
you were waiting
for me, blue
under the chemical
lights, nowhere,
and only I got off
and you were there,

amaze me by knowing
the geometry
of my body and all its
ifs and how it touches
the tensions we share
just by being
there in the night
alone and the train
gone over the horizon.

8 September 1993

These things are waiting
where? Near me
where everything is,
a because
like a cay in the tropics

the curious noise
palm trees make
even when you can't feel
a hint of wind---
rats you think,
in the trashy fibers
shivering down the trunk.

Not rats. Nothing is.
Your doubt
singing to you again
louder than the blue ocean
breaking at your feet.

8 September 1993

Taking your time
is about the only
thing you can do with it

—sounds folksy like a Christmas wreath
and feels a little phony
like Stockbridge, Mass.
but what the hell,
people have to look at something
if they want to keep from seeing.

Sounds feels looks seems —
a dreamer dreams he's dreaming
someone else's dreams.

9 September 1993

HEEDING

The way the dialogue begins
doesn't depend on any
body being there. Words
talk to words, and the thinker's
pulse quickens, adrenaline

does its tiresome jurassic thing
and all the musculature
marches to the imagined fray.
Sit still. There is a chemical
distilled from hours,
from paying heed

to what is not said and is not
saying and is not the issue.
Look aside quickly
just past the edge of what you're thinking.
And be quiet there with that.

9 September 1993

Still, the dove does waddle past
fatly indigent always
beautiful needy the way birds are

pecks at a cookie on the ground.
Interested but not devoted to it.
There is time in his world still to decide.

9 September 1993

Elbows of almsgivers
lit by scarlet votive candle
light in undercrofts

we pray where we can.
François de Sales and the re-
catholicking of Savoy,

amazing, like bringing Luther to Rome,
that city "of no hills,"
Geneva.

9 September 1993