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just the way he likes it

a swan with no sugar
a radio without a single flame
someday he will write down
a catalogue of all his father's silences,

their flavors and durations
then he'll come to yours
the unforgiven index of what you never said
and smiled all the while you never said it.

Then the day takes over.
We have longer obligations:
to mourn the murdered dictator
on our way to mourning those he killed

and made the likes of us complicit
paying our silent taxes for this or that war
then quick as a bird flying away from the window
suddenly I know what silence is for.

And what will I do with what I know?
Let it fall, dear friend, armload
of leaf and flower on the empty table.

II.

Poinsettias. Red bract
big on someone else's
petals. Dull green leaves.
A quality of saturated color
but with no brightness,
no sheen. No shine.

It used to scare me,
still does a little, so red,
and the twenty foot tall tree of them
in Wiesbaden, can't get it out of my mind,

as if every life you have to come to this bright casino
where colors lose their own sheen, shine,
and Dostoevsky flees by night
leaving thousands of rubles in bad debts,
one for every day of his life,
running from his life
through the ever increasing numbers,
numbers where the distances are stored
alone can heal him, hide him
from what he wants to be.

And I have walked with him
from the casino, night, December,
through the well-kept park of the glamorous suicides,
neat pollarded elms
clubby fists of them against the sky.

III.

Hope again. Habit
keeps you going,
the jailer brings breakfast,
good enough to eat.

You measure the sun
through the sextant of your cupped hands,
flesh telescope.
Today's the day they let you out.
You wipe your tin plate and wake.

No one to stop you but your feelings.
Carve a door, fit a handle to it,
throw it open and go forth
screaming Easter at every step, *da bin i!*
here I am and am and the roses
are to be happy with your company.

Here I am, girls, here I am
abbesses of so many secret convents
deep-daled in dragon woods,
here be I, with no roses,
now flowers at all but my blossoming need.

You step along a way
you've been before
but this time you know it,
everything brings you to you.

The violent association
of thing with other thing
that we call thinking
requires an equally violent
disjunction applied by
waking mind – hauling
the rose out of roses—
and making the mind work
to dance modestly on
the other side of being,
we have a name for that too,
look close and you're doing it

and out of the smile comes
a kind of strutting forward
and out of the forward gait a road.
And you are the road.

30 December 2006

[PARERGON TO THESE CONCERTI]

I have striven for some of the symmetries and lyrical disconnects that make Mozart Mozart. Aping his self-absorbed tenderness (air sign, seldom reaching out to any individual Other) I have tried to wake up *in*, then *to*, then *from* his music.

30 XII 06

24. K.491

So many wars
columns of soldiers
between stone columns
squeezed, march
into the city

the mind hovers around catastrophe

bees on linden flowers

the mind hovers hard around catastrophe

ripens, even tragedy
needs time,
and a man,

needs a man, always alone,
walks along.
a man walks along

a woman always attended
no matter how far she walks
can never outwalk her faithful suitor

fateful

some man
her shadow

1. a woman can never walk alone
2. a woman can never escape her shadow
3. a man is the shadow of a woman.

and from these scant axioms
we have to build our culture

columns
between
we also march

later, when the city falls.

Self in society,
the music flees,
everything I want is right here,
why am I running from all that?

flight reflex
cadenzas of flightless birds

love sacrifices
heaped on broken altars

smoldering. *Thou hast turn'd
the very air to incense
and made a church of every street*

love poetry heavy left hand
translated this excitement
into the steady state of metal
which hides its crystal structure
in general sheen,

that *ælf-scîm* I explained,
the staggering potency of beauty
mere beauty locked in every single thing,
the hidden Powers of the world
time to release,

Bruno Schulz dying in the street
his head pillowed on the curb
at the feet of the beautiful invisible woman
he served,

your skin, the shine.
Once he paused, drank,
tasted another person's lips
one time on that same cup

before him, he wonders,
wonders. Who. One column
is wonder, one is doubt.

Within their shadows
the city rises and falls,
armies come in and go out,
lovers simper in the shelter
of ordinary rock.

The street
where I was born
I have no other
body but the time
it comes from
a dreary little song
getting excited about itself
and then the shadow
slips down the column
hides under it
and it's noon

[*Perahia's cadenza begins, rocky*]

(a hint of naïve r&r here
as if to bring the timeless
up to date – at first
I hated it, then I heard it
kindly, simply, breath
of a living man trying
to hear himself think now)

leaving us to wonder what language
our masters will try to make us speak now.

II.
Such little things
some little
things are

commas in long sentences
wielding sense
if any
any makes

To be little
is be everywhere
a servant of sensation

bird trill.
And now the world
is just a dream of dead friends,

strange cigarettes
in a country they still smoke
and going downhill

(but I was staying)
they vanished into the ravine
underbrush and a bird

was crying, one that thrilled you
with what you called its baritone
cry, a bird I knew an octave up

but this one was now, low,
and forests had vanished, friends
always a dubious frontier

passes, borderguards
daylight itself nothing but a customs post,
guarded. And then good night.

Gute Nacht, du falsche Welt!
he sings in another valley
when he fails the test,

but the world turns true,
gives him the girl, and we
are left alone with daylight fading,

winter afternoon in opera season.

You and your candles
me in my miner's cap:

we risk it
can we get through the dark

one more time and still not know
the strange potentates dressed up as animals

who wait for us there
trying to catch me by the sleeve

and make me turn and expose
my startled crime

to their glowing eyes
I have been running away from all my life.

III.

(That is the power here, beneath the lovely lyric is the lonely lover lover-less. idling down some path. And beneath that idleness a horror waits. What. This music is all about the horror underneath. And how to pass over, how to get to one more morning, safe once more from the demons of whom I'm made. This is the truth now, music is Montaigne, music knows itself so well it can distract us both from what we know — don't we?— what is going on down there, down here in me and thee, down here where music leads the way, crying, to all the dead friends, the gods who failed, the religions that just went away, the languages I couldn't learn, the houses that crumbled underneath me or the claustrophobic ones I fled, all the dead loves, all the doors, all the sensations, every feeling, all banked down there, my father's furnace, a bomber falls from the sky, everything I ever knew or felt died and went to heaven, and heaven is this hell to which the music summons, step by step, inexorable: *What you have experienced is all you are, all you ever are. What you have done is all you will be. Don't look for some identity – you are a wave in water. And your friends are dead.*)

Help. The oracle
says that to everyone,
everybody who has a body,
a body is a thing to hear and touch,
listen to me is all a body ever says
and has no word to speak except it is.
Is that enough? No,
it turns. It is the carousel again,
all we knew,
some rode easy wooden horses,
some wait till the gold-green dragon comes around.

31 December 2007

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The necessity is close to the hollow place behind some ribs. Things happen here. Here Helen hides from her abductor and her husband both, here Moses decides against leaving Egypt ever. Bring it with us, he tells the Habiru, his people, and they do. The sea is seldom far.

People are always coming through the door and saying odd things, things not easy to understand, sometimes they're not even speaking language. Something else.

31 December 2006