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Even when music speaks, it still does not speak to us.

– Rilke, 1914 (*writing to Magda von Hattingberg*)

1.

I hate saying no. Your name
is Tone, or Town, or Tune.
What does it mean that I said
no to tone or tune? In the town
music will not speak to me.

2.

All I want to do is listen
because it's the way we speak,
those of us who are children
of a voice, born
from something we heard.

3.

Bat Qol, they say, Daughter of a Voice
or the voice, we hear
what Rilke listened to.
How he hated Germans,
with all their music they would never listen.

4.

Bat qol, the voice's daughter,
muse or meaning. A poet
listens to the obscure
prompting of a word. Overheard.
Listen to the blackboard
singing under the ridiculous chalk.
But the daughter of the voice
keeps speaking, the girls
hurrying the season saunter by outside.

=====

Sometimes even a bishop tells the truth
there is a crow on the lawn why lie about it

well he's not there right now but I saw him before
how do you know he's a he? who isn't?

we all are Xs and Ys nobody is pure girl
yeled a boy *yalda* another kind of boy

so it's just where you put the vowel
it stays in my mouth all juicy and hot

breath is a kind of manifesto
but what is she saying in his words

why are we so fucked up all we need
is a night off every few minutes

then the delicate persimmons come again
like a sleeper's eyes finally beginning to dream.

23 March 2005

YEARS

Every waiting is an *hour*.
Every idea is a *day*.

“What are years,” she said without asking.

Different answers offered:

- rivers. –sheep browsing over the crest of a hill.
- starling flock in March arriving.
- the damned in hell remembering autumn birch trees.
- ill-paid translators accompanying Central Asian potentates.

That comes closest. Years
are translations of a lost original. Oh.

But the potentates are really here,
you can smell the delicate garlic in their breath,
the mare’s milk yogurt,
you can reach out and touch their bristly chins
yet still not understand a word they’re saying.

The translators are on strike
forever. The sun is shining in the rain.

Those are years.

23 March 2005

SOUHAITS

Hold the wall up
with a wish.
Let the person of the beloved
sink into you
becoming your person.
Now there is no difference.
The banks go crazy,
snow falls in spring,
black turns brown, gold
changes into blackberries.
Geography lesson.
There is a castle
where all this is true.
It is called the Chateau You
and lives in the harbor
of an aching ancient city
with a fat tower over it
topped by a golden image of
a God nobody knows.
And when nobody remembers
then we are together
just like a glass of water.
Or (forgive me) the sea.

23 March 2005

TUDOR

The title of a book I wrote
according to this dream.
In a blurb I wrote for Paul Muldoon
I am identified as the author
of *Tudor*, nothing more.

Wrong title? Wrong me?
Waking, I understood that publishers
only see the future,
are all about the future so *Tudor*
is a book I have to write.

Starting right now,
starting with Wyatt and Raleigh,
starting with you.

24 March 2005

CAFETERIA

Instead of standing there at the counter waiting for the guy to make your bacon and eggs why don't we have a new kind of employee in the restaurant who will wait there for you so you can go and sit down at the nice table and he will bring you your breakfast when it's ready and since he does your waiting for you we'll call him a waiter doesn't that sound like a good idea and besides it'll give somebody a job.

24 March 2005

AFFLICTED WITH LUCIDITY

he disposed some ink around the page,
loops and lines, loops and lines.

Then the piano began, with the pedal
held too long so everything roared

like starting an old car in the garage.
Music, we call this, makes the words
go down easy and stay put inside,

rumble rumble, loops and lines,
honeybuns, scarecrow in the cornfield

the wind does our dancing for us
the snow falls in clumps from branches

you call that a piano? I think the crows have won.

25 March 2005

SHUT-INS

Peter, do you remember shut-ins?
The announcer used to speak of them
voices tinged with condescension
pity and distance: *and for all*
the shut-ins at home, they'd say,
where else would they be,
Grant's Tomb, Rockefeller Center,
pie-faced little boys under sweaty
counterpanes, listening to the same
radio shows we did, same adventures
visualized from the heavy handed cues,
clues, the actors gave us, sound effects,
the shut-ins were there with us,
pirates and detectives and land of the lost.
Embarrassing! to meet them there,
their empty eyes and sallow skin,
withered limbs, strange pock marks,
rashes, flushes, impetigo, vertigo—
and they longed to shoot and get shot
like the rest of us, sailors, shipwrecks,
cowboys, Indian scouts, get the girl,
get the boy, come home with diamonds.
But they were home already and always.
Saint Mandrake the Magician, pray for them!
Where are all the shut-ins now?
Did television cure them, send them
out in the streets now, limping around?
Is that why there are so many cars?

24 March 2005
for Peter Lamborn Wilson
End of Notebook 274

Today is the day Christ washed the feet of his friends.

I am your friend, come let me kneel
at your knees and wash off the dust
and distances of all your journeys

that brought you to me. Then you
can wash my feet, each of us
can play the game called Christ

loving and leaving, loving, leaving,
today is the day to wash the feet of the sky.
Look up the long blue dress of it

and see where he has vanished now,
Egypt up there and he's on the road again
dusty and difficult to understand.

All they taught us was Be Christ.
We have to learn for ourselves
what it means to be a friend.

24 March 2005
(class exercise)

ANNUNCIATION / GOOD FRIDAY

In such a year
the date of a man's
conception and the day of his death
is the same day

In the chanceries of Europe they write down
puella ignota impregnata est
and then they write in their curious alphabets
meant to keep ordinary people from understanding
aliquis Judeus mortus est
extra Jerusalem and close their books

For history wants none of us
we who leave no footprints on the marble stairs
only shadows on strangers

and then somehow the strangers go
back to their own country
carrying their random memories
a pretty girl they saw in Avignon
a Serbian restaurant in Vienna
some Jew that they saw dying on a hill

and here and there a pregnant teenaged exile
waddles towards the minute of her glory

karma, calendars, clocks the waves
lapping, washing our feet when he is gone

master, mother, monster,
strange custom of your absence

a centaur sobbing in the woods.

25 March 2005

=====

If I sat on a throne
wearing my medals and crown
I would scratch graffiti in
the golden chair arms
with my diamond ring—

it's not enough to rule.
You must leave the very power
by which you rule
shaped by your wielding it,

you have to add
new letters to the alphabet
new days to the week
a new color between seven and eight

change the base, change the base of all.
The world must never be the same
when you get finished breathing.

25 March 2005

MEDITATION

Let the body do it
while the mind
sleeps in the lap of the mind.

26 III 05

=====

Begin the intimate again
or be a farmer
whose fields of tomatoes
humiliate the Jersey sun

being brighter than what illumines you

honey, give more than you get.

This is Faust's acre,
once-famous Source of Radio Emission,

this is up there,
in you, high and tight,

all the scatter
shields us
from what we know

the aftermath,
the crippled gymnast hobbling home.

Is she here yet, near yet,
does she have a huge
public voice to guide us
into and our of her traditions,

our solemn traffic with the moon,
trumps of lost systems,
zodiacs of scattered nurses
each one with a different kind of milk?

26 March 2005

=====

How loud is the poem?
Who is it talking to?

Blake, say, could talk as loud as he liked
since nobody was listening,

you whisper a word
the way a shy soldier
carves his girl friend's name
with furtive gladness
on a temple wall
in a conquered country
his land will lose

and she lasts forever.

26 March 2005

=====

I need to see you say.

I have painted the whole city
rich with considerable detail

houses and bricks and servant girls
sewing by window light

but I used a dry brush to do it
so everything seems thin, needy,

needs you in this *dürftig* time,
I need to see you

speak the colors richer
while I listen carefully

even timidly to what I thought I said

when now it talks back,
the little dog in her arms, the odd

hunchbacked merchant on the corner
looking up at the moon.

26 March 2005

=====

Isn't that what Eleusis was, a subway station for a train that never came, but that forever you heard roaring up the track, heard and knew, saw the headlight coming, saw and heard and knew.

and we go down into the ground to hear the horse
and the horse takes her away, all our pretty Persephones,
blonde and ashen and mulberry, away

(26 March 2005)

=====

To know this much and then be more
silent music of the empty stone
opened to the absence
that keeps us company
two thousand years, that is
the time from when you were born till now,

map of all time.

27 March 2005

DANSE

So on the last dance
she chose me – the Crown
Prince's czardas that closes
the bal funèbre– her hand
clammy, cold in mine,
my other sought the slope
of her kidneys as our Gypsies
say or as the poets claim
the Hill of Dreams
and she was cold there too.
Which means my hands
must still have been warm
– a sign of life! a jasmine
not yet melted in moonlight!
(a flower is so fragile an idea).

27 March 2005

=====

Is it time
to speak yet
the long
adventure

of the ordinary,
wind through
the trellis
and a hand

reaches through?

27 March 2005