

4-2021

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REGLES DE JEU

An irrepressible anxiety
expresses itself as game.
What game? It begins
by finding out its own name,
its rules. Who are you
today? What is it like
when all the verbs
are taken away? Cloisters
open, columns fall,
no prisons at all? Where
do you put your feet
during play, and where
are you standing
when the game is done?
No mattress, no matrix,
shrill finches out the window,
something to go on.
If you could only hold

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**the moment at arm's length,
turn it in your hands,
study it to pieces and begin.
Then you can begin.**

27 April 2021

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**I would have more to say
if I were me. But I'm not
myself now, just woke up
and most of me is still that
fraternal monster of my sleep,
and what does he know
about the morning? But so much
he knows about the dark
I am afraid to ask. So I confess
to silence. Forgive me this once.**

27 April 2021

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**Who comes so early
to be who I am?
That's not what doors
are supposed to be for.
Early, early, coffee, coffee
real plum sucked, plucked
from imaginary tree.
All the palm rees of Pennsylvania
shelter me from morning,
oil on the table, fork in drawer,
how could this be morning
with all that light? And me,
have you found me yet,
I ache with not being known.**

27 April 2021

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**I steal the tree
I stole before
the fruit I leave behind—
it's its uprightness
that i need, the sense
to stand and let
all your lovers go.**

27 April 2021

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**It's just a little notebook
it can;'t do everything.
Oh yeah? Hava look at this.**

27.IV.21

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**A distant presence
you feel as you read,
car doors closing
in a neighbor's drive,
someone's breathing
in any empty room.**

27.IV.21

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**Quacking below
where the stream
ponds out beside
the terrace where we sit
tossing bits of what
we eat down there
to feed what we might
love or like but can't
actually know. Oh no?
Believe me, love
knows more than mind.**

28 April 2021

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Music, sublime addiction.
What comes next?
The ampersand built it
to all our knowing, wanting,
sense of need. How many
notes does it take
to say a tune? Are we caught
in someone else's melody?
O harps and drums
and women's voices.
the whole sky can't hold them.
pang of the insolent guitar.

2.

In this [rt of town
dogs play the banjo
and bears blare out
Bruckner from old

**;loudspeakers with paper cones,
twelve-inchers, remember Klipsch?
In this part of town the porcupines
trot along marimbas
and elephants moan Marin Marais.**

3.

**We need space between us
and music won'tt allow it,
we need to touch each other
but only music touches us.**

4.

**Then that painful relief
called silence comes,
when music taunts us,
tempts us to want more,
all the old technology of repetition,
keyboard, needle, reel of tape,
glowing tubes, a fipple**

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**pressed to our dry lips,
make yourself heard, blow
baby, blow, and wonder
what the trees think when we sing.**

28 April 2021

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**Sometimes I think it is
some other month
but still today. Numbers
get in the way.**

**The absence of evidence
is evidence, as the lawyers say,
those criminals on the other
side of crime.**

**Believe
the no evidence, let me fear
all by myself a snowstorm
on this summer day.**

28 April 2021

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**I've forgotten my Latin
Greek and Tibetan,
I guess that English
will be the next to go.
Then the trees will
sleep in peace in me,
beech birch poplar elm.**

29 April 2021

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**Everything elsewhere
and here I an--
only a king could
rule such vastness,
space rolls out from my hands.**

29 April 2021

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**The conversation
goes like this: field
full of flowers. Squills
have faded, jonquils
persist. The mower
is careful where he goes.
Mows. Yes. The book
is boring though, as so
many are when your mind
is on something else.
What. More than I can say.
No one is waiting.
And there is no gate.
I think there is. Then
go find it. I think I have.**

29 April 2021

EXERCIS

is such a strange
religion, to use up your breaths,
steps, lifts-- they say
it's good for you, but all creeds
promise that. Run panting
along the road, lift up
twice your weight in steel,
gallop with a dozen others
on rattling machinery. This
is virtue. In a way that's true,
virtues from Latin, means
the quality of a vir, a he-man,
not a sissy or a frow. I grieve
for them when I see them
Sunday morning sweating
jogging in their endless church,
sometimes with A nimble
acolyte dog trotting at their side.

29 April 2021

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**Spirit shouts out of matter
Don't you know me yet?
I have been talking to you
all your life, you have heard
and thought I was some other
but I was this. And this. And this.
And everything you ever saw
or touched or rested on,
all of me everywhere is telling.
Rejoice, child, you have been told.**

29 April 2021

THE EXAMINER

**could be a paper
could be a woman
with a marking pen
in front of a class.
Could be a bank clerk
studying accounts,
an art historian guessing
at provenance or forgery.
Could be the doctor
gazing at my skin, fear,
or at least anxiety in
every examination, takes
the anima right out of you,
o where can I rest unseen?**

29 April 2021

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**When all the trees
have puffed out their green,
one stands leafless proud.
This is the poet, in shabby grandeur,
shouting this is who I am
not just something I do.
O poor dead tree,
the neighbors say,
I am not dead, the poet tree cries,
I stand for nakedness and truth.
A little ashamed of shouting,
feeling a need for friendship,
little by little lets a few
leaves come out.
And then some more. More.**

29 April 2021

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SPOIL THE ROD

**Let there be no punishment
and who knows?
Crime and sin might
vanish from the world.
Pairs need each other
to exist at all. Banish all
the vile dualisms from the earth.
Only one pair is needed,
woman and man. And I'm
not sso sure about the man.**

29 April 2021

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**These moral musings
annoy. Like mice
in the bedclothes,
kibitzers by the chessboard,
or at least a dog not near
barking in the night.**

29 April 2021

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ODE TO THE OTHER SIDE

like Wordsworth crossing the sands
hearing vaguely
Napoleon is dead
from a stranger on his own way
from the mainland. Or
shadow of the tower at Winchester.
Or the lady from New Hampshire
who took care of me, see,
here she is spinning a wheel
the children play on, even me,
see, here is a map of Thailand
with the popular beaches
marked in red. Or on the radio
a sonata of Scarlatti, remember,
the steps of Whitby, Caedmon's dream,
or was it a dream, or my father's
black Pontiac, yes? Or the moon
on nights like this mist and rain
and still it wanes brightly ovrthead,

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**see what it means? Or the mosaic
wall mostly sea-blue
in the cafeteria on Flatbush,
buses pass, persist, they let you
stand up as you ride,
some of them, leather handles
slung down from the sky.
Or a lock of auburn hair
they claim was mine,
or the wicker basket with apples,
I never much liked apples,
too simple for me, I wanted France
and model railroads and a cup
shaped like two joined hands
as if one drank from someone's
generous giving, but whose?
Or the turtle in the garden,
tortoise really, or the cliffs
of Donegal, or DNA or alphabets,
or that girl walking in the rain,
you knew she'd be here,**

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**or what Wordsworth rewrote
when he got home, Dorothy
staring out the window,
or a child playing with string,
it can go anywhere, fold in upon
itself or open like the rising sun.
Is it time yet? Have the Sxons landed?
Always something more to be said.**

29 April 2021

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**The phrenologist
felt the bums and ripples
on the Moon, decided
the orb has a headache
can be cured by visitors
in person or through poems
scribbled on; y by moonlight
then left lying on the lawn—
but the writers are allowed
to memorize them and write
them neatly in books
when they get home.**

29 April 2021

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This is different,
this is forgetting.
The ceremonies of sleep
all cjamged, memory
ungrammatical, sacred
texts scattered, lost.
Or this is waking.
This is trying
to be me again, the one
lost in sleep. Or was he ever.

2.

It is over. Not a dream
but an erasure. Where
did the dark go,
what did it take with it?
Maybe it just got
tired of being me.

**There was a religion
with four parts to each day
and some small text
laid down in it, physically somewhere.
had to be done and I hadn't
and don't even know even now
what it was or how to say it
or retrieve each one
at morning and offer it to birds.**

3.

**Why do white cars scare me
as they roll down the hill?
Are they like strokes, erasing
memories and liturgies
hurried into emptiness?
Or is it politics again,
white supremacists
busy erasing the other?**

5.

Chessboard with no pieces on it.
That is a comfort, sort of,
chessmen they call them
though some are horses
or even elephants, and the rook
is not a bird anymore
but a rower where birds might live.
And best of all there is a Queen.
The board is empty, no war,
no stylized aggression,
smug rejoinders. The game
is somewhere else. Or not
a game at all. A hedge
on a dark lawn, a broken mallet
on the green, a rabbit asleep.
Hard as I'm trying I'm
still not me.

6.

Did I have reason
for not walking
out in the rain?
All day in the house
and when I tried
soft rain sift sifted down
as if to say no matter
brother just stay home.
Was it wrong to listen,
to linger? I have waited
ob the words all my life
and still try to listen.
Rain is *Ra in* — stay inside
and let the sun follow you home.

7.

Specious argument
but a vague comfort
like a table set for dinner

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when you're not the least hungry.

I have been imitating

clouds too long, my meaning

lost in the laundry.

Try to wake. Try to spell it right.

30 April 2021

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**These are not the people I mean to be
or have around me, words quivering.**

**May Eve and ancient terrors
calmed into legends and little
rituals, only my fingertips
remember the old fear,
tremble a little as the sun
pierces through cloud
a moment then gives up.**

**It's only morning, and the real
Walpurgisnacht comes at night,
tonight, bonfires, and who
will our witches be?**

**Magic is all about symmetry--
hide these words
so they can be understood.**

30 April 2021

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The poet's task, of course, is to bring order out of chaos. Chaos is the Mind, the great yawning emptiness (the yawning gap, *ginnugagap*, our ancestors called it), the great Nothing from which everything comes. Order in the poet's case means *ord-er*, the word itself as agent, we put a W in front of Nordic *ord* to caress it with a whisper.

Order out of chaos -= word out of mind.

Order is the agency of words, the poet obeys the *ord-er* and speaks the words that come to be spoken. Say them, play them, they are your fate, *fatum*, 'what has been spoken.'

30 April 2021

