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CICADAS

**If you hurt one of these little machines
you'll be reborn in seventeen years
with red eyes and golden wings
and make a lot of noise
sing frantically a little while
a demon or a daimon just like me.**

(28 June 2013)

ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 10

for Betty

On a scale of 1 to 10

the rain falls wet

Lenin's mummy outlasts glasnost.

The kingdom of cicadas rises and falls,

on a scale of 1 to 10

our caves are brighter now and less dank

diner coffee keeps getting better

waitresses get older and blonder

and I don't know for sure where all this goes

Nero Wolfe would call it amphigory,

nonsense verse, nonsense with numbers,

on a scale of 1 to 10

I've hardly begun

the muddy Orinoco impregnates the sea,

the Homestead Act is far away

but the prairies are still there

people I knew got acres in Alaska

even in the 1950s -- ah,

there's a number at last, or four of them,

all of them but one on a scale of 1 to 10

and that one was none

so on a scale of 1 to 10
the world has not even yet begun
and all the pizza parlors and battleships
are just illusions and I'm beginning
(speaking of beginnings)
to wonder about me,

on a scale of 1 to 10 am I here yet,
is there anyone behind this noise you hear,
people buzzing about the cicadas, poor things,
they don't even exist on a scale of 1 to 10,
only André Breton has got their number,
Arcane 17 from long ago Gaspé, and Canada,
what is Canada on a scale of 1 to 10,
and shall I count the ways,
let alone Massachusetts?

On a scale of 1 to 10
pain for instance is usually at zero or eleven
but pleasure measures
itself meekly, how rarely joys
or even blisses
get past 8 or 9,
and from what we read in the Bible
heaven doesn't even get to 7,
all those feathers, all that
stone-age music on tin harps.

**But where was I on a scale of 1 to 10,
was I a pirate was I a priest,
all nouns are 10 all verbs are maybe
depending on who's looking,
on who's talking,
and who is listening?**

**On a scale of 1 to 10
is it you or is it him,
the man in the moon, the woman in the wind
or is it window, on a scale
of 1 to 10 is it even now yet,
this bright day I'm trying to believe
all the numbers scattered round my feet,
birds chasing beetles, shadows chasing sun,
on a scale of 1 to 10
am I even me?**

(28 June 2013)

194.

**So much denial kings before Eden
nothing was ever, all the rest was obvious
Orpheus exiting from the underside of words
to try again and again for pretty sunny days
but o no o no Vienna always wins
flee back to ferly land and talk to daisies
feast on clover and try to be
superbly be, as if a lion walked off a coat of arms
and moved into a tower on another
and we lived together beside an almond tree
the weather always told us what to do
look over the wheat field a ship comes sailing.**

195.

Elmendorph's Corners ten acres of Kansas in the Hudson Valley

I go there at night to see the stars escaped from trees

or did when my objectives could still focus

past the play of boy and girl and see the soft bed of it

and all these bright people going up the air

the further away they are the more they blaze

(28 June 2013)

196.

**And there are the children at the gate
the psalmists keening by the hilltop shrines
the lean poesy of denunciation
when praise is all the air that feeds
our holy fire
once for all
it spoke and said Do not be all male
for the masculine alone is weak
terribly weak and needy of conflict to assert
what cannot be asserted
the unprovable axiom of manhood
building empires wrong again and again wind blows away.**

197.

**The stones begin to speak now
tell me all I know
long ago but all too close the trees
whose house is that with one light showing
I dug a well where no water was
I built a staircase down to solid rock
no cellar no root cellar no winter apples
spread the table with no cloth
on each empty plate a spoon of dust
for it likes if you do not waste the fuel for flames
sit quiet with the shivered memories of your life
now you can do nothing but listen and no one speaks.**

(29 June 2013)

198.

**The poor poor blame the billionaires
but I say the poor are to blame
so many of them wanting to have more more
isn't there a way of wanting less
no food no shelter no wanting at all?
if all the poor laughed all at once
the billionaires would crumple up and blow away
he said so just be hungry with a smile
be lonely and speak to no one
already the ink on hundred dollar bills is fading
already the water in your well turns into wine
already gold melts pours out a highway to some world.**

199.

**Posthuman is to be beyond desire
to want no more than wood does
standing in the sunlight in the snow
making more of us by being so
and those stones know us too
one day calcium will have a voice
garnet in the Adirondacks speak
red wisdom to the risen poor
be enough the other side to be!
this is politics the throb of music
Bartok Beethoven Bruckner Bach.**

200.

**How heavy the weight of blank paper
carried all my life in blunt photography
spiritual effluent of Eusapia Palladino
the crux of psychic plausibility
does all this light come out of a woman's body
is there any other source for splendor in the world
om tare tutare ture soha
she is sixteen still green in the ways of men
and she alone can save us from calamity
or tell us who can
listen to the green girl at last
the ever-virgin the truth the wisdom sleeps beside me.**

(29 June 2013)

201.

**As if in mime an elegant body told
the whole story from grass to cathédrale
innumerable declensions of her single noun
the dancer absolute
so the mild persistent taste of moving anywhere
from lawn to grass again the poor smell of money too
we live in poverty we shadows of some great wealth
the potentates the kings whose kingdoms fit in their wallets
they rule the world but we could too
as this lone dancer springs up from the sounding floor
and with a single swerve of movement
changes space forever in the way we see.**

(30 June 2013)

202.

The only thing that can't go on is going on
it all begins every perceptual quantum afresh
only the qualia sometimes linger
o Abelard o quanta qualia
the golden sabbaths of the wounded heart
wanting to know how to make it go
don't let the children come in
all birds belong to you and fish are mine
pale wild-eyed ones swimming in my cavern
we who walk along the ground the strangest are
misshapen by bent over a bad book
our whole lives pictured there in code.

203.

**Muybridge photos of a breaking heart
a daffodil in haste a monkey in a window
a dreary paper they call The Daily Olds
deer are watching from the new woods
how many years have they been here
looking, crashing into our cars, waiting for something
waiting for us to do something about ourselves
units of intelligent remorse
all the broken answers
war is never an option war is never
bring me your hand to hold at least
the old man's sword used to cut bread.**

204.

**Don't put up more signs
I hear them hammer their stakes in
for sale signs by the frightened houses
how poignant to move among the living
how her body leaps to welcome circumstance
what the editor wrote down instead of 'God'
haunted by temple friezes a harlot in heaven
noble souls entrusted to my care
catch a reflection of the rising sun
outline with pencil the shadows of the leaves
till all the trees are written down
then sleep beside it till the rooster crows.**

205.

I hear him over the hill or is that the sun in my eyes
a picture long enough to wrap around your waist
and go romancing to an old book
slippery pavement on the road to Neaux
in this cicada year the moon says less
moon no bigger than a mosquito
moon buzzing in my eyes
till the cock crowed and here I am
cicadas fuguing with the buzzing in my ears
with one hypnotic pass I wake me up
look Robert there are days inside the day
the birds are gone but the sky is still there.

206.

**Could I have heard another when I thought was now
leave every I out and see what it means
real presence split the log he is there
drink salvation from an empty glass
too many voices for so few words
we suffer from the vice of versa
they marched into battle with The World Turned Upside Down
revolution only benefits the landlords old or new
would she kiss the icon of a commissar?
at some point or no point it will get tired of me
then what will you do
not even the wind in your ears?**

207.

**Starting and stopping is the same as love
properties of archaic Tocharian
guide me grammar through the spiel of trees
obscure selvedge of a vast weave
a carpet made of sand
flowers half faded dinky here and there
your footsteps rearrange the floor
walking and talking like a blessed Greek
they didn't know how lucky they were
pagans are the only ones left laughing
after the grimoire of the bank accounts
the Grand Guignol of local government.**

208.

**Maddening stillness of the summer air
here as if nobody's there, nobody cares
I come from wind and you far more
crystal movement of the invisible
emphasis belongs to humankind
gods write the book we put the italics in
the trouble is as with Hopkins' beauty
it never seems not to be a poem
never a simple language thing that happens by
still seizes the breath or chills the heart
there has to be nobody listening when I speak
so that the words break free to all of you.**

209.

**Lead the document across the sea
where Quaker folk will still hymn their silence
and the red rooves of Whitby doze in the mist**

(ix desunt)

(30 June 2013)