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Speedreading poetry.

Chinese shorthand.

A priori must be based on sounds alone.

in Mandarin a few hundred syllables plus four tones say all the hundred thousand words.

Just write the syllable, hear it onto the paper.

Everything might be easier than we think.

Anything is easier than thinking.

15 August 2009
joggers and such—
if it takes them so much time
to be healthy,
what will they do when they’re sick?

15.VIII.09.
UNKNOWN COUNTRY

The cool of the day
aligns itself with Spain
it said in my head
and I don’t know why

rose of Sharon at my left
black-eyed Susan right
pink and yellow and who knows why
and Spain is not my country

never was, but is a single syllable
could that be why
the sky is blue, I could have said France
but not Peru, does the world

come tumbling out of its names,
maybe I should have said Greece,
there are so few, some aestheto-political
agenda must be in play here too,

something the words are telling me
about how the world actually is—
a cruel country on a pretty day,
a single syllable floating in the sky?
No flowers in the sickroom we heard
they take the patient’s breath away.
Oxygen exchange. Slave trade.
Port of Spain. It has to be, and I’m

at sea again afloat on my desires’
sweet clarity, safe from each other
today people sealed in airconditioned cars
little Ahabs scoffing at the sun.

*El aire de Madrid es tan sutil*

*que mata a un hombre y no apaga a un candil*

Gaddis put that in my head fifty years ago
in one of the 700 copies of the book got sold

or did he — *tan sutil* — make it up himself
among all the other forgeries? The years
are impostors. Such a cruel country,
I like the way they use prepositions

to lead up to a direct object: kill to a man
but not blow out to a candle, Spain, Spain,
you upside-down question stuck in my head,
all the dead alchemists and missing Jews,
the murdered Moors, cruel as we are,
the cool of every evening aligns itself
with ancient cruelty, Maybe I mean that.
I’ve spent my life saying what comes to mind.

15 August 2009
Because the wind is blowing in my eyes
I see summer. What else could I be
but one with my hands on the weather
feeling up the sky.

It is the nature
of nature
for me to do.

I am there
with the thunder also,
with the after-sun.

16 August 2009
THE GAME

Men play
only against beauty.
There is kindness
and there is blue sky.
Then there is chess
a game with no one in it
shapes moving in emptiness.

It could be anywhere
numbers cast shadows
your fingers can feel the shadows
move in dry soft rigidity.
The numbers loved you a little
then they were gone.

16 August 2009
The shadow crept across my hand
with nothing to cast it.
Then the shadow slipped off
my fingertip and fell—
as if an inkstain
suddenly cleansed.

When the shadow walks
and the man sits still
someone is knowing something
that you don’t know.

16 August 2009
Cry of other bird.
Psaltery. Music explains everything—
or silences it all
into its own persuasion
—we all go
to that damned church,
all we give up
for such beauty.

For Orpheus is Lent
as well as springtime,
from this sour wine

exquisite drunkennesses.

17 August 2009
If this were time
it would be who?
A matchstick boy
in search of fire
and boy scout angels
pelting through trees
outracing deer

trying to prove
something to God
the way we all
are taught to do
centuries in church

see we can
outstrip appetite
stumble blind and abstinent
through the infinite museum.

17 August 2009
I wish I had an appetite
to give up for Lent, a phone call
this elegant young phone could make.

To outgrow your desires
is like a car outgrowing gasoline.

No wonder they cut living flowers
and heap them on the recent dead.

17 August 2009
Crows call
and that is all.
Open morning—
what more
could love give?

17.VIII.09
MITHRIDATES

All the languages waiting to be learned.

Wanting us to know.

When you get down to it you can’t think you know much about the world if you don’t know all the languages in it

how can I bear not knowing what an Armenian or Fijian or Gilyak knows so well?

Or that Hungarian over there more cultured and euro-svelte than I still knows some thing only Central Asia knows,

hard sky with a hawk in it.

***

Every language is a piece of the puzzle. A necessary piece, and woe to us when we let pieces vanish from the world.

Chomsky tried to get through the back door of language, arguing away differences in hopes of finding (monotheism triumphant) the Master Plan, some little god in the cerebrum. Meantime the living evidence was dying out, whole languages vanishing every year as native speakers passed away. Linguistics lost fieldwork and relaxed into speculation.
Can we imagine a person who knows all human languages? How many languages can one person know, use, speak, recognize? Are there any hard studies or soft traditions, anecdotes, any Mithridates left?

And what really happens (Chomsky, to be fair, might ask some form of this question too), what really happens when the Buddha speaks and all the hearers hear Him speaking their own language?

As ditto the Apostles when the Paraclete came down in tongues of fire on them and these unlettered men were heard to speak all languages.

Can we breed for language facility, like Pharaoh Psammeticus devote a family to raising, generation after generation, more and more skilful acquirers of language, until one day there stood forth:

a child who could speak everything?

And who would tell us?

To that Child I offer up this cup.

18 August 2009
Waiting for the slow
unfolding of what system of governance
was or was not available.

A summerwind right now
midAtlantic storm tomorrow
and I had broken the rock down

I had crumbled human history
like old brick too long in the fireplace
things break, stories come out

the Mercy has taken the king away
we are alone with our own,
the terrible brother.

18 August 2009
Too many things not to worry about
a princess in golden satin babushka
with a herd of bison roaming her shoulderblades
you’ve been there too you knew the mother
who flooded the neighborhood with her pollen
and now you have to pretend to be a gladiolus
so people will bring you home and give you water
and you can blossom lance by lance
you don’t need much more than your own flourishing
just look at you all ruddy please look at me.

18 August 2009
Too hurried to worry
there is remorse built in
era of asthma
not so much to do
as not to be done to
carf’d in letterys fyne
over the bleak gate.
Once there was iron.

Do you remember a dove
seven stories down in Waikiki
when we were roof?
To look down on a bird.

We learned then what it means
to look down into the sky
as at Makapu’u you knew
(but I was afraid)
how to walk on the wind.

Everything is a matter
of finding the right island.

See, the land you live on
changes the language you speak,
shapes it—over a few
generations—into its voice too,
the earth’s voice in that place,
not just yours.

The words coming out of your mouth
don’t come just from you.

Once you know that,
no talk is quite the same.

This ground says me.

Land, language, and genetics
the pivot in the middle.

19 August 2009
BOUKRANION

But the bull’s head
still rests on the rock
and the bees long since
have hived in its hollows.
The horns hold up the sky.

You never needed more than this:
to know that you’re utterly alive
and that you’ll die, and all the while
life is busy in your hollow head
with nourishment and amplitude

leaving an empty place in you
between right and left
a place that is the same as the sky.

19 August 2009