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OF SOLSTICE

A few hours from now
or only one
the sun stands still

this is the longest
day begin again

she did love him
after all
the bowling alley
was only an excuse
one night can last forever

one night can only last forever

that first kiss
inside the terra cotta

the touch typist trying to say kiss typed loss instead
so close so close

no wonder I search through the alphabet

a dead bird nailed to the barn.

Kiss me. I mean it.
I am fourteen
and know better
than I ever will again,

some things are kisses some things are losses

this is now I want you now
the words we say to each other
are the only summer

(every natural green thing is a kiss
he thought, Mahler and her eyes
the limitless agitation of her breasts,

doing, doing to.

It will be warm today
all over

what is it supposed to be
why does the sky read our calendar
our optimist theologies
dynasty by dynasty murderous and silly
until no concept gels
and the building falls

so I rent a little cottage (here’s the deal)
on your parent’s estate in Florida
they think I’m going to sponge off them and you
but I take them out to dinner
and fill them with elegant fish
and my credit card glitters with pure gold
and when your dessert is served the waitress
holds her breath and lifts the silver dome off the bombe
and the crystal bowl is full of rubies
for you, for you,
the whole dream is just for you
and they just get their persimmon sorbet.

21 June 2002
Schmelzer Pandolfi Biber

and the agony the violin the represented

it is natural the agony

that’s what Pythagoras was after
an anatomy of human pain

the angel said. This much-vaulted music that you
and only you of all the sentients make
is just a species of pain you’ve grown to savor

that lonely shepherd with his empty flute
the only hollow that will have him
and these Italian travelers in Austria
exporting their discomforts,
the permanent malaise of melody

and what can you do when the seizure comes?
dance? Take off your clothes
and run across the boulevard of the beholders,
tear your private meanings off
and just be anybody

hurt by everything you hear.

And hence, the angel said, the aggressiveness
of those who make music,
those sadists, those fascists
who force you to hear.
All music is manipulative, don’t you know that yet?
All art is anger.
Everything I say is just a way to get at you.
All beauty is desire

traveling on its dark snake paths from me to you.

21 June 2002

(from a letter to Sharon Mesmer, 22 June 2002)

... [Saint] Therese. I like her because she said (presumably speaking to Jesus, but we were all listening) Give me the pain of the world, and the only photo I know of her shows her smiling, face of a shy intelligent girl I'd make it my business to talk to at the party. Smiling as she said that -- and in the sadhana (you Hindus would say) the practice of taking on pain (in a highly symbolized way) is an important element. I love it when something I found with great effort in the Himalayas winks back at me from a plaster image in my parish church. I love it that god has so many lips.

... . Biber. ... . The Mystery Sonatas, 1680 or so, too late for you, I know. A suite of fifteen violin sonatas mapped on the fifteen mysteries of the Rosary. It changes where music lives in us. Yesterday (perhaps somewhat thinking of your Temporal Lobe Epilepsy words, the curious description of all symptoms, no disease) I began to realize, and this was a shock I'm still working with, that music is essentially pain, made of pain, made of slim or throbbing little tortures. All music. The howl of absence that is the lonely shepherd's flute, etc.

We certainly all know that musicians are manipulative in spades, and often enough sadistic. But this was the first time I understood that the inherent manipulativeness of music is built of the fibers of pain. And we are taught somehow to find out pleasure there.

Maybe dance is a way for the body to throw off the pain. Maybe poetry (chanting like Thespis in his troupe) is a way to throw off the pain, make it verbal, mental, social, share it away.

With Biber's incredible work (and Pandolfi before him, and Schmelzer, all before Bach's violin partita and cello suites) the pythagorean strings learned the anatomy of our poor glorious bodies
Picturesque, paranoia of the.

1. Anxiety that every touristic attraction will be spoiled or destroyed by the excessive attentions of visitors combined with the malevolent enterprises of commerce.

2. Fear of destroying what you behold by beholding it.

No one ever has arrived in a place without suspecting or being told that he arrives too late. He should have seen it before the ________. The blank in the syntagma can be filled from an infinite paradigm of deprecated nouns (Romans, War, tourists, Americans).

Since every tourist deems himself the ideal viewer of the object’s essence, and suspects that the essence itself has been withheld by the corrupting influences already noted (and don’t forget the Japanese, the inflation, and the Jews), his whole act of witness has been spoiled. It is accordingly clear that everything done to make the world ugly is done against me.

21 June 2002
But then there was something else. She stood at the mailbox and wondered what it was. What it is. The mail still comes. Nothing usually ever stops. She felt what it felt like for hands to touch her breasts, and the question became as usual whose. Whose hands. Not in the sense of John’s or Julia’s but in the sense of hers or another’s. It’s the question of the apostrophe at the heart of our lives. The core of matter is who’s is it?

Who owns this house. Who lives in it. Why (her dream had asked her this more than one night in more than one year), why is this house inhabited by the wrong person, not the one who properly should be living in it, the one who actually understands what rooms are for, the one who understands where the light is supposed to go.

Across the street the sidewalk was crowded, here not. She was almost alone on the pavement, her right hand resting lightly on her left breast, the gently swollen nipple held snug between fingertips. Index finger, middle finger. The hand and its breast were more or less hidden from the people across the street by the big body of the mailbox, atop which her other hand was resting, in the posture of someone tired at the close of day, and wondering when someone would come officially and pick up the mail she had just deposited in the hollow clanking chute. She did not care. It was not that kind of mail.

Her fingers, her breasts, her house. His hands, his house. Does it matter whose touch whose? Why do we belong so much to the names of things?

If she closed her eyes, would her breast know the difference? But what of the self-aware presence in a body that knows it’s doing this to itself? Does the darkness cancel that? Is there in sensation itself an energy of erasure that fills the body with such meaningfulness, such sensation, that there’s no room for all that grammar. All those apostrophes, guesses, names.
Why do we need anybody at all? Why do we need even this one, the one leaning against the mailbox? Hide. We have bodies to hide in, that’s all. You can’t walk around all day with a mailbox in front of you. You have to trust the body you’re in, to hide you. And hide you only from those who don’t know how to see. How to see you. You could be invisible. Like a body touched.

21 June 2002
Certainties

Big confusion. Beginners begin.
What are they called
who bring to completion.
Fruition. The seed
needs someone else the bird the wind.
Everyone needs someone else.
Not just anyone. Confusions.

What are they called
who do or bring or tell
us what we need.
If I were still a beginner
I would remember. Now what do I do?

It isn’t Vienna. It isn’t the Himalayas.
Everybody needs a private mountain,
another city. Everybody needs
a comma between one thing and the next,
a rest, a coma, a sense of taste of yes
this is finished. This glass is done.

But there are only interruptions.
Sleeps. And that other thing.

22 June 2002
WHY ARE THERE NO X’S IN THIS Y?

Who caught the Irish (taught them Irish?) to advance off the blue cliffs of the Bloody Foreland sent them to meditate

until all their minds were the same as the sea?

**

Who taught me to cling to the midriff of the maid as if she were a tree and I her animal belonged only to her touch?

**

Who taught the cannibals to live without string in a world where every meeting is complete?

**

The patient’s suicide says Hillman does not end
the analytic process
for the analyst he says.
How to make a problem
insoluble: kill it.
All living systems
submit to solution.
You. Or it could be me.

**

Who taught the mockingbird
to feel no scorn
for those he mocks?
Gesture, gesture, gesture, song ----
no room for feeling
in so much giving. Singing.

**

The representation
is worse than the bite.

**

Passionflower, what kind of name
is that, what vegetable
ever wanted you the way I do?

**

Who taught the ink
to make such complex curves
a stranger’s eye
following can tell
what’s on my mind?

**

Obedient to the word he spake
the prophet sails into the sky.

There is a German picture of this,
rain and no angels.

Sky full of everything but me.

**

Who taught the farrier
(what’s a farrier? Somebody
who fixes horses up)
to squeeze
such speed
into the hoof, such
anxiety of nostrils,
such thunder
under the beaten earth?
Behold what love is,
a horse rushing from the sound of its own hooves.

22 June 2002
YELLOWLEGS

Bird silhouette
in a bright window.
Who taught
this might mean something?

Whistle if you know.
Whistle what?
A song with no beginning.

22 June 2002
INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE RITUAL

Next to this there has to be a chalice. And into that you pour some other thing, wine if you can get it, or milk, or cola, doesn’t matter, sprinkle from the cup until the antependium is wet. The fluent cloth that hangs before the altar. Altar means table. Table means surface made to float in the air. Air is a complex amalgam of gasses, some for you some I hope for me. Sprinkle until the congregants are wet. Those fools in all their beauty clustered round the table. Fool means someone who loves you as himself. Herself. So few are sure but these few are, loves of your life, the pure ones. The Pure. When the cup is empty put the day away.

22 June 2002
Who taught the animals to make noise without speaking? What a gift to be silent out loud. The shadowless conversation of this now.

22 June 2002
Wappingers Falls
The musculature of the human male
is so clear on the doctor’s wall charts.
But in me it is dark,
dark streets and shady parks
and who is in there?
These things that move and feel are me.
This pain has a name. This strange
gaudy map of veins and muscles
is inside me. It makes me tired.
It makes me want to go to sleep
alone with this strange companion.

22 June 2002
Wappingers Falls
ELEGY FOR ACTION

Because of the openings
so many
  the gaps we made art

  once you could trust
an understanding other
to leap
  through the instructive silences
and land right here on Turtle Island

once there was discourse with room for us

once we could all be part of the problem.
Now it is elegy and remorse,
three-something brokers with Che posters on the wall
the radical
  is chic and nothing doing,
commodity and doing nothing, self-consoling imagery and doing nothing

not even the elegant non-doing they call prayer.

23 June 2002
When I’m sure I know what I mean I’ll mean something else.

23 VI 02
....ICONOCLASM

A woodcarved bird, sandpiper maybe –
representation damages specifics

the spaces of the treble staff
are labeled with the letters of your father’s name

that’s why you flew here in winter
and spilled your shadow on the Temple Mount

to flee from idols.
But we live inside Moloch

even here, even tomorrow
and you have to analyze the obvious

till you trust His hidden countenance.
Only the absent deity avails.

23 June 2002