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**Quarantine Notebook**

**WEEK 10 • 31<sup>ST</sup> May 2020**

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**MUSCALIET**

ODES

1.

What, Lydia, I most love  
 About the gardens of Adonis  
 Are the fleeting roses  
 That die the very day they flower;  
 Eternity, for them, is daylight:  
 They open when the sun is at its height,  
 And fade before Apollo's run his course  
 Across what's visible of the sky.  
 We also, Lydia, must make  
 A single day of our own lives:  
 We neither know nor shall we ever know  
 Anything about the night  
 Before or after our brief time.

2.

The genius to be wholly what you are  
 Requires the tenacity  
 Of an illusion. Do not exaggerate  
 Or fend off any part of you.  
 Be absolute in giving  
 The completeness of your self  
 Even to the least act you perform.  
 Unsubdued by any beauty of the garden,  
 The full moon is reflected  
 In each pool of standing water.

TREDECIM

*(For Moyra, after W.S. Graham's 'Approaches To How They Behave')*

What is this tied together by deft touch  
 upbeat shuffles  
 free verse free prose  
 text as graph  
 bin-diving through movement of strophe to strophe  
 by metrics of difference  
 of phoneme or phrase  
 spread too thin or stretched out to the good  
 always an on-the-nose lunge  
 for attention's deficit in ducking & diving  
 between this & the hard fact  
 rhythms of recurrence  
 impossible to unravel  
 believing as we do  
 so to speak  
 many might  
 nimble-fingered  
 unweave that string of knots by chance  
 pull the rug from under  
 each empirically true particular

even the smallest most quiet that reverberates

modestly

reverting to the tonic

briefly before escaping

again from all signature

while new line new measure asserts itself

points to define a periphery

never by itself alone

no analogue

just this simplicity with the light

these twin *aegithalos* bouncing along a windowsill

‘what does it matter if the words...’.

IAN BRINTON

### AUTUMNAL CHANT

*(An interpretation of Baudelaire’s ‘Chant d’Automne’,  
written as an address to Marie Daubrun, 30<sup>th</sup> November 1859)*

#### I

Soon shall we be immersed in shadowed cold;  
Farewell brief brightness of our short-lived summer!  
I listen to the deathly thud of logs  
Echoing round the pavements of our yards.

Winter forces entry through my door: anger,  
Bitterness, shivering and fear: forced hard labour;  
And like the sun that’s reached its frozen nadir  
My heart shall be no more than one iced block of red.

Shaking I listen to each log as it falls;  
The erection of a scaffold could sound no more like doom.  
My soul is like the tower which crumbles  
In response to an unchecked battering-ram.

My cradle is pounded by the never-ceasing blows,  
A coffin nailed in haste, but O for whom?  
Yesterday was summer, enter autumn!  
The pealing of a bell announces ‘Gone’!

II

I love the green hue of your oval eyes  
My still Muse, but all today is sour  
And neither the chamber nor the hearthside of your love  
Is worth a glint of sunlight on the sea.

And yet reveal your care my tender love,  
Be mother to my erring, graceless ways;  
As lover or as sister, shed a fleeting sweetness  
Of an autumn or a sun that sinks to rest.

Brief request – the jaws of death are open!  
Let me place my forehead on your lap  
To taste what was the burning white of summer  
In the yellow rays and *douceur* of the Fall.

SIMON SMITH

LOST TRACK

strong white the path chalk  
lost track beneath the canopy  
to a kind of tree-house a construct  
to stick sit it out in the woods  
Douanier Rousseau come home now  
stepped out of the dream  
through the safety glass  
& on to the list  
& trace & track 'at risk'  
pastoral maintenance  
is the drill & drill deep to  
make a find you must  
step out & furlough  
this to sing up make good instead  
a cloud floats by  
the voices there & luminous

the votes not  
the air on skin wearing the air  
notched off the time punched hard into  
into the mud ruts & potholes  
below tree crowns  
belated & benighted rulers fragged  
& royal as Romanov & as extinct  
this step on the way to exile  
to the place of retirement  
& faded where this trail runs cold will not  
violet sheen snuck up unearthed as bluebells  
sprung up along a verge frame a track  
devises a local area network  
add nightingales' notation inviolate  
flinging notes left & right & centre & industrial with their noise  
about the canopy  
when all above is all as the World is data  
& content fragmentation  
the spill from black bin liners

shredded unidentifiable waste split  
the dawn & its chorus  
drifting off like breath early on the air  
by the side of the road to the surgery  
blue surges up the incline up the uphill  
into the storm & tumult risen on the boom  
from under the canopy or shelter  
from under branches shuttered shadow  
from under the shadow's shadow  
the air above presses on & out  
what the threadbare song  
wheezes along to  
a return from the carnival  
evening like a jungle  
hut home shed dwelling flat shack sanctuary  
cave apartment shelter mansion street lean-to  
make it what you will is to  
call it what you call  
lived into

a coronet to round it off  
to the distant drum  
of the great spotted woodpecker  
listening out for each other  
echo back off the trunk  
above a police drone whizzes down  
scrutinises cyclops-like glass eye to the letter  
hunted out where the seconds tick  
insects beneath bark  
like dripping water  
& true as a nuclear clock  
pips squeezed peep peep peep from the radio  
faraway now jackhammer-like pounding away  
rebounds where buildings trees plants earth  
re-sound the sound back untouched standing  
as the air moves is moved slowly  
so reading the eyes  
the complete poem in the incomplete world  
bits of

out of touch  
intensely form from silence from the least sayable  
to folding into the first  
quick syllable nothing more or nothing less  
cold & uploaded flipped  
white cartridge paper as white  
more than white more particular more accurate more  
as breathing air is eased in breathing in  
in lockstep aid to the patient  
the body running short of oxygen  
the blood running dark & venous  
the body run round with chalky outline  
& the light which sees  
& the mask which masks  
the moon a shadow at midday  
it's the same wood in the rain  
in the bird house in the tree house in the trees  
branches to ventricles  
the crown cock-eyed & precarious

through the aorta & away  
& the same bluebell intensely violet  
data buffering twined & waiting  
all locked down in the wood with the carbon  
warbler nightingale sparrow blackbird swift  
on the wing their song braided under netting  
cuckoo to the ark the heart the puzzle  
& note to Self in the morning  
consult the parliament of fowls  
a house for a voice  
a house for a song  
bursting at what is there a clearing  
& in the clearing a symmetry of the staircase  
the simple flight or elegant spiral  
centre through  
the A-frame house threaded  
cloud reflections creep up the window asymmetric  
clown & wife returned home  
& through the wood & through

the air through the canopy  
a forked path then a bend  
on the point of departure  
windhover on hold  
the letters are ghosts  
tick the air when the word is translated  
into touch ahead of running  
is how to read a landscape first then canter  
how to read this lane I find myself in  
how the nightingale defragged the environment  
sure as partita follows sonata  
sure as how a washing of the hands  
escapes coronation  
in the midway of the night  
light switched on  
neon flicker above  
the washing of hands one to twenty  
light snapped off  
from the medicine cabinet a dose



to add precautions to  
the calm of a mirror  
its flatnesses floating there  
a stage set  
a diamond an aviary  
where the birds are ghosts  
their wings shadows  
some people freeze in the image  
the parliament of crowds  
listen out to the ice of it groan  
to untie the knots in 'yes'  
yes to yesterday yes to everything  
& the true answers that got left behind  
laid off you see lost track of to the Ouija  
mist & chill & dead voice what coalesced  
my journey became truth at the board  
becoming the colour of nothing & betrayal  
in the presence of the figures  
no shape to them

pathfinders no profile to speak of  
at dusk white & black & grey at  
the edges  
into the long walk of 2020  
the diamonds & black gold  
dig the graves one by one  
bumping against borders passing over into shade  
& canopy chatter  
leaves dripping to the end of the story  
it is evening  
me tight up on the microphone & microscope  
intent close in on the detail  
unseen to the eye  
& the covenant that part  
to inhabit the space between perimeter fence & watchtower  
the peek forward & inevitable switch suit  
sees you lay down with the knave of hearts  
lists lies & choice of choices  
with a glance sideways

is to tip over from openness  
crash into test & failure to test  
to materialise in specks & droplets  
the light fails the sky grey & luminous  
cast milkinesses of light particles a dice-throw away  
the whine of approach then departure  
an ever-diminishing zing  
ever diminishing  
dies away  
to nought  
but would you trade your house for voice would you  
for nothing the sparrow hopping through the car park  
dust bowl & sun nowhere to be seen for nothing  
locked down to the diamonds on the wet black roads  
that transported us here in one hand all one suit  
in the other what time sunset  
& what time the tide turns  
at dusk the blackbird cacophonous & echoey  
the clatterer down the alley

were his dice thrown he will follow  
as he patrols the territory of days & nights  
the sand & muffled shouts from the other side  
of the wall he wears the song thin  
the Ouija was right  
my Facebook profile lives forever see  
in permanent black  
'Goodbye'  
from the edge of the board speaking  
the small hours fraying away  
insects singing the understorey  
wear the song down to note  
by note leading to  
cell lysis on exposure to the air  
to celluloid combustion frame  
by frame & chain breakage  
film clattering light out of  
the projector uncontrollably  
& blindingly real

& white & bleached

transparency melted away safety

film scorched out

of its core to the bone

dissolving at the crossroads

thin & then

RENÉ DAUMAL, TRANS. SIMON EVERETT

## THE PHANTOM'S SKIN

I drag my hope with my bag of nails,  
I drag my strangled hope to your feet,  
you who are no longer,  
and I who am no more.

I drag a bag of nails over the shore of embers  
chanting all the names that I could give you  
and those I have no longer.  
On the barque, she rots – that pile of rags  
in which my life once throbbed;  
all boards nailed down,  
rotten on her paillasse  
with those dead eyes,  
ears deaf to your voice,  
skin too dull to feel you  
when you brush against it,  
passing in an ill wind.

And now I have despoiled the rot,  
all white I enter you,  
my new ghost-skin  
already shivering in your air.

## LIMINARY NYMPH

A dead woman wanders the corridors;  
 look at that – she’s not even seen the light of day,  
 and she wants to play the phantom,  
 and she takes on tragic airs  
 and if you joke about in the hallways,  
 watch it! watch it!  
 and if you swing on your chair,  
 watch out! beware of the small one  
 with her rags of fog,  
 with her hands, those transparent rags,  
 she stuffs your gob  
 and you choke  
 and you collapse on the sofa...  
 I do not want to remember this, but always,  
 all the landscapes I have imagined,  
 I recall with a blood clot at the corner of their lips...  
 a prowling dead woman, watch out!  
 a dead woman who shrivels by the hour  
 hanging from your neck, as a rag,  
     so as to say: here’s the bolt  
 that bars you into this hellhole.

## FROM ‘THE BRAHMS BOOK’, PAGE TWO

The door. Yes, expected. Up the dancers he goes.

The great man is introducing him to his bloss Clara, but he can only think of what Joachim had said in Göttingen: ‘ever see a bear dancing? That’s Herr Schumann.’ He had expected romantic fineness, urgency, grace, in such a cove. Dr. S. is guts and garbage. Or – to adjust the commentary to his surroundings – possessed of considerable heft.

But absurd to come all the way from Hamburg just to be impressed by the heft of a Schumann. His own father has heft, he knows all too well, along with the kind of left hand which manages valves on the flügelhorn not so cow-handed, and his right fin the double-bass bow pretty well too, but had also been all too delighted to tune him when as a squeaker he had first objected to playing down at the *Animierkneipe*. But, God, for a squeaker couldn’t he just play. Anything. Hear it once, play it again, play it better than when he first heard it, play it better than anyone. Every sailors’ song, every dance anyone ever heard whistled. They stay with you, such things.

Or they did when you were a squeaker.

Dr. S. smiles.

MOYRA TOURLAMAIN

LOCKDOWN LET LOOSE

Seconds spike  
the big guns.  
Sage and cobra, lion and unicorn engage  
Four nations in one day  
Tread lightly on those dreams  
Of unity, community, opportunity.

This bit's pulling all the stops  
Out of mind, heart  
Skull and bones the next  
Best foot forward to stay  
In the same place.

Salt on the tail of the snail.  
Ersatz hope. Just add cold water.