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Editor: Klaus J. Gerken

European Editor: Mois Benarroch

Contributing Editors: Jack R. Wesdorp

Previous Associate Editors: Igal Koshevoy; Evan Light; Pedro Sena; Oswald Le Winter; Heather Ferguson; Patrick White

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Introduction

Dave Shortt

When Damona Like a Gallic Psyche Gave Herself to Jules Dupré, Painter

Cathar folk've come down in the afternoon
to regard the cattle in their swale,
a pathos scene of Peloponnese altars transubstantiated
in dumb beasts drinking, knights
left the country
to search desert sands for the minotaur's hoofprints,
sky chaos (like secular societies) is pieced together
revealing a frontier of troubadours, south
of the mind's pigments mixed into
the vegetable kingdom, they
sing of the multifold Lady
of the Trees & Waters
disguised as seasonal rains, springs or (now)
earth's stretched orbit, her
dominance-easing arts
created in the verdant humid plain
where once Shiva (imagined)
imagined himself western ('Cernunnos'-like) fauna
& flora that grandmothered
the globality of his lover diplomacy,
a godlike distancing
composed in provinciality
pictured in his skin's stratospheric hues,
while his 'milk-cheeked' his
'chai-cheeked' Parvati consort duality
follows him everywhere
(to 'Rosmerta'?) as he wanders
far from castle keeps
in his role of helping quench the thirsts

of pine & oak,
while more to the north
Demeter reaches ('Nantosuelta') the shade of beeches,
able to hear the machinery of the cities, but must rest
near a few stragglers escaped from the manger,
following an eastern music growing stronger
the closer she gets to her daughter, probably
kidnapped by enmity formed in the steppe
to a faithful reproduction of nature,
or she was sold
to hungry dwarves unmoved
by any layer of vestigial Color
in 'white-veiled Berecynthia' 's wepongrip-loosening form,
shadowed by ghosts of Charlemagne crossing
in posthumous search for a daub of earth
containing the raw material of art,
lifted out of a life of pillaging
kitchen garden images of '*deae Matres*' the Mothers
& the poor stars, into the ire
of iron

the defiles, the poorly drained private
land not susceptible to invasion 'for 2000 years,'
where foreign ideas would become mired, bored,
consciousness was of little or no use there,
(the cow she'd come home each night innately,
the war was ending again by chance today, under a
pink sky splayed into position
for cosmopolitan or *Völkerwanderung* rapes

post-revolutionary green was showing, risqué,
while the barbarians (hidden) begin collecting everything
(their pottery wasn't worth bringing along, not as pretty
as they'd like,
on bleeding horses they descended
into the shade of a giant oak,
eventually riding off, disappearing
under an image of human equality

finally the sea was to become brother & sister
to an aesthetic looking west,
when the tired boats like penitents
were called back to Bonaparte
from legendary fur & fish,
after forgotten brushes with vikings again,

black & blue obsessions
festering beneath aquamarine nixie-bodies,
coming back up the rivers?
(best settle the motherless bastard nightmares
on a sandy beach appraised
at a mercenary price, under a truce
tinting a crêched coastal plain,
the boats lazily receiving for the instant
Poincaré's hydrodynamic equations questioning existence(s) down
to a quick brushstroke in the background
where Rimbaud bivouacs

Marie Lecrivain

Snarl

This morning, you revealed to me
a bit of geometric perfection
from a corner of the universe.

I struggled to understand
the finer points of your discovery.
At this time, I'm still not quite

fluent in the language of magic,
& so, I rely on non-verbal cues;
your smile, the laughter in your voice,

the falcon swoop of your right hand
as you sketched a gentle star
in the air; a small solar triumph

that shone between us. Transfixed
& frustrated, I struggled to mold
words from my muddy intellect;

you declared my opinions false,
my intentions untrue, & your time
wasted. I don't know how we

looped ourselves into a Gordian
knot. What use is love when it's
always measured in IQ points?

Santa Clarita

It's a cool late autumn afternoon with the perfect touch of chaparral dryness. I can almost smell the dusty rich scent of fallen oak leaves as I peek out the window to admire barren branches of those same trees. The dark foothills lay their backs against the sky which now deepens its colors to indigo, crimson and purple.

*my heart unfolds
in the impressionist
twilight*

All too soon, civilization appears. Squat strip malls, the cluster of church steeples have replaced the fields where I used to walk reverently between rows of 400-year-old oaks. Neon billboards flash ads for upcoming movie premiers, loose slots at Indian casinos, and Christmas services for the faithful.

The train starts to slow down. Around me, people gather their belongings. Over the intercom, the conductor announces stop, along with an admonition to not walk on the train tracks.

I hate the cancer that is progress, the swift eradication of the natural world that was a part of my childhood. For me to leave my seat, to leave the train, means I have to accept the death of my past.

The train has stopped. I catch a glimpse of you through my window. I grab my bag and leave my seat. At the train door, I'm again greeted with the aroma of warm oak leaves. I'm glad I came.

*in my heart
what I hold dear
will never leave me*

Laundromat Hiroshima

The old man screams into his cell phone,
his sparse gray hair spirals out from his scalp,
yellow eyes bulge in their sockets,
every rough & mysterious syllable
made smooth by his anger...
&, I wonder what he's saying:

No, I don't want to switch my long distance carrier!

*The Zombie Apocalypse is extremely f*cking nigh!*

You broke my heart... I can't take it anymore!

All... or none of these... I don't have a clue,
& everyone shocked into silence,
the day momentarily shattered
by the atom bomb of his outrage,
as the spinning of dryers
whisk away time & tears.

Rust

Amidst bleary gawkers drinking tea
& dissecting the role of magnetized men,

a grandfather engages in disparaging,
affectionate remarks about his grandson

to passersby. One can almost hear
the corroded gears of his brain

turn in protest as he ponders
the probabilities of his grandson,

imagines all manner of futures dire
for his descendant, measures these

against his pre-Jurassic sensibilities,
and comes up wanting. He derives no joy

from this mental exertion, doesn't notice
the rust falling to the floor as he shifts

back & forth in his seat. All he sees
is the potential for destruction in the

curious hands of the child about to
press down on the faded ivory keys

of an antique harpsichord. He snaps
his fingers to ward off future liability,

a trail of rust wafting in his wake.

Surazeus Simon Seamount

Principles of Nature

Excerpt from Change of Herakleitos

Science of Hermes

Herakleitos teaches his growing son
concepts of wisdom and experience,
describing active principles of nature,
while they explore woods along river shore.
"Thunderbolt of Zeus, that strikes to spark fire,
generates life by transforming old shapes
to new shapes in natural process of change,
judging and seizing all things in pure light.
Every group of people you meet on road
of life speaks language that their mothers taught
to classify things and actions through words
defined by qualities organized in spells,
and convey thoughts of how each man perceives
diverse objects that form our complex world.
Never accept what I teach you as truth
for you must investigate beyond thoughts
I convey through words to find your own truth.
Pythagoras, son of jeweler Mnesarkhos,
practiced inquiry to examine things
for seeking knowledge of why things exist,
and composed his own wisdom in new books
that show much learning but poor workmanship.
Pythagoras named order of life on Gaia
as Kosmos to describe how everything
is organized in system of natural laws
that define structure of our world and stars
measured by recurring cycle of light
that flashes reflected from changing moon.
No god or man formed structure of our world
but it always was, and is, and shall be,
animated by ever-living fire
that kindles bright flame, then flickers out dark
in measure of time, counting life and death.
All things are generated by conflict
of opposing forces that spark soul fire,
then flow together complete, like swift stream
bounded by limits, to form one whole world.
Our Kosmos, formed by sun, stars, rain, and soil,
is born from fire, and resolves back to fire,
in fixed cycles through all eternity,

determined by fate that steers destiny.
God is conscious will of desire and hope
that motivates all living creatures, love
urging our minds to comprehend all things
and our hands to manipulate material
for changing shape of wood and stone in forms
of tools and utensils that aid our actions
when we create crafts and cook wholesome food.
Theos combines day with night, war with peace,
winter with summer, and satiety with hunger,
to balance all opposites in harmony,
for vast immortal soul of God transforms
alternating cycle of singing fire
that mixes spices with enchanting scent.
A drunk man is led by a beardless youth,
stumbling and ignorant how to get back home
because his soul is wet from too much wine.
It is better to conceal ignorance
but that is hard when relaxed drinking wine.
Character of every man is displayed
by his Daemon, which animates his soul,
for you can judge if man is good or evil
depending on how he treats other people,
with hateful control or loving respect.
All my life I have been seeking myself,
teaching myself how to investigate
facts about places and people and things,
so I know myself and understand why
I perform actions urged on by emotions.
At Delphoi, carved above temple of truth,
where Apollon presides over weird rites,
are words first spoken by Pemonoe,
daughter of Apollon who composed tales
in rhythmic hexameter to display
how noble heroes of justice behave.
She sang true admonition, know yourself,
for to know yourself is to know divine truth.
That man who knows himself well
will follow secret voice of his own mind,
for as I journeyed road where my soul lead
I sought to find knowledge of our great world,
so every fact I know I taught myself.
Every man should know secrets of himself,
and learn self-control to manage his passions,
and channel desire through creative change,
because self-control is our highest virtue,
and wisdom is to speak truth about life
based on knowledge gained by exploring facts.

Then he should act to effect vibrant change
through conscious will, to enhance natural force,
since it is hard to contend against passion,
for it buys with its life whatever it craves
by spending energy to attain pleasure.
When you exercise strength of self-control,
searching to understand expansive soul,
you will reach limits in body of flesh,
but you will never find bounds of your soul,
for that unformed power extends beyond mind,
though you should traverse every way on this world
and seek to find limits of what we know.
Force of our souls flows through body of flesh
as we transform through each stage of our lives,
like water that flows through channel of dirt,
for water and dirt together form stream
like spirit and flesh together form man,
so we never step in same river twice
for both man and river change over time.
Now fire lives in death of dirt, and air lives
in death of fire, and water lives in death
of air, and dirt lives in death of water,
yet all other things are exchanged for fire,
and fire is exchanged for all other things,
same way as wares for gold and gold for wares
are exchanged for people to purchase things,
method of exchange that Hermes devised.
To our souls it is death to become water,
and to water it is death to become soil,
but soil forms water, and water forms soul.
At birth man is kindled like light at night,
but his bright soul is extinguished at death,
and while he lives, shining light of his eyes,
he borders upon dark death while he sleeps,
and borders upon dim sleep while he wakes,
floating in waves of impressions and dreams.
Vast sea that surrounds dry lands where we live
is poured out and measured in same proportion
that existed before water formed land.
Sea water is pure yet foul, for while fish
drink salted sea water with healthy zest,
yet men cannot ingest it in their flesh,
for they would suffer agonizing death.
Harmony of our great world is composed
of opposites that balance mutual forces,
like bow and lyre formed from limb and taut string,
for one is used to kill, and one is used
to make music that enchants human souls,

so cold becomes warm, then warm becomes cold,
and wet becomes dry, then dry becomes wet,
in mutual cycle of opposite forces
that match, defined clear by what they become.
This steep road that we walk, up mountain slope,
is same road that we walk going back down,
so way upward and way downward are same.
Good and evil forces, that seem to fight,
balance each other through intense contention,
for they reflect each other from clear shape,
and substance of clashing force is defined
by its opposite to obtain new state
by becoming what its opposite lacks.
Thus ceaseless tension through constant desire,
that controls our hopes and wearies our minds
through constant labor, to grow beyond ourselves,
controls how we behave, enforcing will,
but constant change of contending desires
wearies our hearts through traversing smart way,
going up and down mountain trail of truth,
till we rest and breathe deep fresh snow-cooled air.
Mixture of mud and water separates,
when not kept in motion by jostling hands,
so contentious forces conglomerate,
and form organic whole in bounded form.
Beginning and end, on periphery
of perfect circle, are one common point,
enclosing opposites through unity
to merge contending waves in harmony.
War is universal, and strife is right,
for by strife all things arise and are used,
while opposite forces shape energy
so we grow beyond bounds of our old selves.
Whether our spirits are living or dead,
whether our minds are awake or asleep,
and whether our bodies are young or old,
these special states are solid transmutations
reflecting each other as opposites.
Immortal spirits, depicted in tales
Hesiodos wrote to remember their lives,
seem to rule this world with immortal right,
but immortals are formed from lives of mortals
who live in death through drama of their lives,
and mortals raising children are immortal,
dying in life while they chase happiness.
Corpses are more worthless than excrement,
for once Daemon of animating life
departs from our bodies, broken or aged,

these bodies we inhabit rot to muck
and fertilize crops that flourish from flesh.
Once we are born, we only will to live,
finding quiet rest in busy progress,
and leave children who will die in their turn,
so one generation grows thirty years
when father sires son, who sires his own son,
but fail to educate their open minds
to explore beyond what their fathers taught,
so most people still believe what they learned
when they were children first exploring things,
and live as if they wander lost in sleep,
refusing to learn any strange new truth.
Open your eyes, beaming light in your mind,
and learn new things every day to construct
more complex view of our vast universe.
Although Law of Reason is common way
to study, learning more truths every day,
yet most people live inside their own dreams
and never try to see beyond what they know.
Crowds of people who run in woods at night,
drinking wine and dancing around bonfires,
follow Dionysos through drunken games,
who initiates lost souls in mysteries
beyond strict reason of pleasure and death.
They follow bold magicians who play tricks,
and believe illusions their eyes perceive,
but deceptions only twist minds of fools
to see fantasies that do not exist.
People forming groups always choose one man
to guide their tribe as living god on Gaia,
but some priests make statues of their dead gods,
and people pray to images in wood
as if they pray and prattle with their house,
knowing nothing about heroes or gods,
who they were or what they did long ago.
These worshippers sacrifice animals,
burning their bodies on altars to stones,
thinking thick smoke feeds spirits of their gods,
when living gods would eat sweet roasted meat,
and when defiled they wash themselves with blood
thinking that purifies their dirty souls,
as if some person who fell in foul mud
should wash his body clean with stinking mud.
Limited mind of single mortal man
cannot perceive complete picture of truth
that constitutes vast structure of our world,
for deep knowledge of unseen mysteries

escapes simple eyes of most average men
because they refuse to believe strange facts
they cannot see with eyes that blink and dream,
but dogs will bark at what they do not know.
Those men who believe what old priests relate
understand our internal divine voice
as little as young child starting to learn
understands complex thoughts of older men
who gained deep knowledge through experience.
Wisest man who explores this complex world,
compared with divine creator of life,
appears simple as wordless apes in trees
in wisdom and beauty shining from light
of immortal sun who dreams in our minds.
Find that immortal soul in your own mind,
and seek knowledge beyond bounds of your words,
so you may one day comprehend deep truth
that shines inside every existing thing
for nothing is permanent except change.
Preserve visions of my words in your mind
so they shine like torch guiding your footsteps
through dark valleys to bright meadows of peace
where you may feast well on honey and milk,
then teach wisdom to your own son in turn,
so our eternal mind lives beyond death."

This passage is an excerpt from the epic poem Science of Hermes, or Hermead, which is a series of biographical narrative poems about the lives and ideas of philosophers and scientists. Most of this passage from the longer poem on the life of Herakleitos contains versified versions of various sayings of his that are preserved.

ae reiff

Nightingale

I.

Prince Edmund sang in metered rhyme to these
Nine lines tuned from Italian romance,
Now I begin the numbers thus to please
The mind and occupy the sense:
If Shelley, Byron, Keats could take the chance
To try to muster time to his desire,
So now a living wight will join their dance;
See how the dark that was once so dire,
May yet revive and kindle new a sea of fire.

II.

And seas of fire even yet we'll know,
As Beowulf stands beside the burning mere
Of plumb immensity before he'll go,
Into the vast abysm without fear,
And wonders if that watery bed's his bier,
Before he draws a breath of earth's sweet air,
And dives into the darkness of the mere:
Just so I reckon it's not comfort's lair,
Unless it be to seek a grand adventure there.

III.

So as the numbers fall from one to ten,
To climax twelve within a single line,
And then my bubbles surface to you friend,
Think nothing less than nothing if you find,
That nothing's gained when nothing has been rhymed:
As sunlight on the shining sea is seen
In glints and glimmers, each a different kind,
So like diffracted light must now I seem
A wretch that seeks to hold a beauty that's unseen.

IV.

Fair, loving beauty, how within the dark
You seem like Grendel's dam behind the mast
Of waters I approach to hellish barks.
Is it the hound or hounds of hell whose task
Was lately muzzled and their jaws held fast
By Heracles? The heroes go before,
And at the end of time who follows last
Of all to the already closing door
Will hear the whispering waters then become a roar.

V.

Enough lament, now turn we to the theme,
Whose gentle guide the gentle only bear,
For she will rage and yet she's beauty's queen,
Who though unknown and black is yet so fair
That you will give your very life to dare
The deepest mire, lacking but yourself,
And leave the labor of this life's poor care,
To reach the glory of her wondrous wealth:
Nor will I wait to go for honor, fame or health.

VI.

Her name is Nightingale whose story's known
To start while she was gazing at a stream,
Where sudden from within his Stygian home
She by the murky Dis at first was seen,
To be so fair, so fit for ravishing,
For he of late was boasting of his power
Imperious to Love, so that Love deemed
To fire than cranky heart with his soft arrow:
So fired, away Dis flew to pluck this fairest flower.

VII.

I cannot guess what only Dis may know,
He may be though most blind from what he's caught,
But he could learn from Merlin in the stone,
Who in unguarded moment's pose would oft
Then teach to her that which himself was taught,
Might wish him that he never took to wife,
But sought the happy apple boughs aloft,
For now she binds him in the stone: a strife
Forever ceasing so that now begins for life.

VIII.

Fell-fated that moment thus Nightingale
Interred long night, for there the dragon sits,
But she behaved herself, nor would she be
Enamored of his being of the pits,
Oh could she somehow quench his burning fits!
But Dis then with his jenny round her wound
A muslin of his own thick mystic wits,
Her gold and red and green he turned to brown,
Now even now, nor then, has remedy been found.

IX.

Now you who've never been below should know
The trees and grass are black with ageless time,
A kind of moss grows there, no holy wells nor snow,
But many pomegranates grow, they line
The path descendant, but no other sign
Of life is found save that within the fruit:
Then dusky Dis these seeds made into wine,
And calling forth his slave with Orphee's lute,
With this sad song and drink made thus to her his suit.

X.

Forget the ivory dawn my dear, forget
The grain and corn that still the earth must love,
Come take to you a deathless art and let
Us to each other silently so prove
With wordlessness, no witness tell, nor move
To any tales how our hearts knit, nor give
Account of what we do, nor say how wove
This fabric of our garment. Unquestioned
Thus our love will die, so it must dying live.

XI.

Much like a transformed beast the winded Dis
Then seemed to Nightingale so bright,
Twice lucid were his eyes that promised bliss,
Would she but deign to leave the world of light,
And take the jewel he hung before her sight,
Oh if she'd only known that this his plight
Of troth was remedy of his design,
To keep her in his arms himself throughout all time.

XII.

Of these the arms plutonic poets sing,
When in a verse the beauty that they see,
Like rubies set within a silver ring,
That speak the pain of our mortality,
They fit with cunning words to their design,
And lift each one to his eternity,
So in the moment's transport of a line,
We change not and forget the ebb and flow of time.

XIII.

So struck and rapt love's heaven in his eyes,
No wit nor thought could pull her from the dream,
Transfixed, her heart could bare hold back its sighs,
Her lips would part and close, and as she seemed
To break, then melt, and forge anew, he deemed
Another time to stop her veiled trance,
For he slacked not: would she then be his Queene?
For like her he unsought had struck Love's chance,
This done they might together wed themselves and dance.

XIV.

Perhaps you think it easy to decide
'Tween life and death, the choice a simple one,
If so this innocent you'll surely chide,
Who yet will sit beside a seely hun,
For she moved not: oh life your skirts and run,
The chorus sings, seek meadows, the daystar,
Oh choose the lovely beams, the golden sun,
Cast darkness from you lest the world so far
From night your mind forget and be forever barred!

XV.

So might of old Bathsheba counseled be,
When David, King, Beloved by God's own heart,
Royal lion finding her so fair, he
Sought to have the joy and sweetest part
Of this life with the next: the arrow's dart
Took him as he took her, but who could say
Himself so pure than when his own thoughts start
To tend to love, that satisfied today,
Tomorrow would not be where he before did lay?

XVI.

She drank, she drank, who cares to speculate
Argues chiefly of her own volition,
Endeavors she despaired of other state,
Persevers that she thought it was her mission,
Or that she did it from her heart's compassion,
To lose her life, and that without a doubt,
To drink the cup and thus her own perdition,
But in the seed within begin to sprout,
Then in the ripened boughs at harvest time the shout

XVII.

Within her breast in winter sweetly sing:
My root is in the earth, I seek the sun,
I love all growth, the green bud in the spring,
And summer's flower aging have I won,
What in my maidenhood was overcome,
For now I know what my green heart then guessed,
That if I die so then I rise again,
The greater world to bring into the less,
And since my love is ever in the earth: yes, yes.

XVIII.

But the Aegean story intervenes,
For Greek Zeus, the so-called king and god,
Consulting with the powers then decreed
That since our Nightingale would choose to sod
The earth Olympian feet would seldom trod,
She could but half the year her wish fulfill:
The other half, said he, lifting his rod,
She spends with him inside the blooming hill,
And underground his secrets learn whene'er she will.

XIX.

But here is transport to a different clime,
From that on earth wherein we pass our days,
Where loutish verse on earth or hell could shine,
As heaven's pale when covered o'er with haze,
Must, when the wind has changed reveal its maze
Of tunnels, caverns, secret doors and seek
The dark wherein the fragrant unblown waves
Of time are still, familiar world, but bleak,
Eternity compared, beyond compare, makes weak

XX.

The bold who drive their flocks inland from sea:
So with the very vision's rise they fall
Who climb Olympus' height, now so do we,
Into the wondrous night again, and all
Our kind remember what we barely saw,
For colors fade and red goes from the leaf,
This paradox inscribed on heaven's wall:
What has no arms, no legs, no skin, no teeth:
And if you answer it you turn to joy from grief.

XXI.

So as the lonely Dis had her consent,
To fold him in these loving ways, his thirst
Increased to measure hopefulness had meant
To slack, but who can speak of it, the first
Of love is known the best, the last the worst,
Nor did he doubt that in his passion's fire,
The seed of love that Cupid's arrow nursed,
Would of the stygian snake and dark so dire,
Weary of his bed and snakey ways, she'd tire.

XXII.

Come then my fair and only love to guide
My thought return back to its sober theme,
Let us back to hell, where lurks the pride
Of this dark majesty, his loving queen,
The burning lake and Cerberus, who seem
Like phantoms here beside unchanging gods,
But in no change, that's death, if right I deem
My destiny within the heavenly log,
For so also we'll want to know aged Pluto's dog.

XXIII.

Come now sweet Edmund, be my human muse
And balm of thought that gives a verse its high
Epithalamion, for you did choose
To pierce the veil of love and there abide
In piteous looks and groans and softer sighs,
Come now into these lines with gentle taste:
Then sudden did I hear Nightingale cry,
Within the bower see her raptured face,
And then I felt my nerves on fire and my blood race.

XXIV.

Say first the gowns which of themselves let fall
Onto the floor, his all of black with stars
Quick-fired in many hues, that it was all
Light, some burning blue, some red, sapphires,
Lightning winks that children in a jar
Might seek to keep till morning then let loose,
And in gold thread outlined that heavenly car
Of old, once let to Phaethon by Zeus,
That ran the stellar regions then fell from its abuse.

XXV.

Hers was a gown of green and gold that wove
The scenes of pastoral life, of herds and sheep,
Of grain and glade and stream that she did love:
Those rippling fields of gold and whitened wheat
So seemed to move and slowly beat
In measure to soft winds, though lying still,
And in the midst a lady kept her seat,
As from her hair a crown of stars down spilled
Light to a crescent moon whereon her feet were still.

XXVI.

Then in that unlit room there came a light,
Effused in general, near the bed to start,
And opened outward as it seemed my sight
Were changed to some unknown and fragrant part
Of smell: it was the music of their art,
And all seemed turned to rose, oh shade of love,
For then I felt it enter at my heart,
As if it overflowing then must prove
A vast and fired boundlessness to make me love.

XXVII.

Not like a gold or flaming light it came,
But in the soft effulgence lovers' wear,
When they, struck in some muse upon the game
That lovers' play, will seem to be thrice fair,
So that they then will glow with colors rare
When by a passing stranger they are seen,
Who thinks that they a robe of light must wear:
Who does not know what such delight will mean
When one from love's embrace by passers-by is seen.

XXVIII.

But though I stood beside the very veil
Wherein they lay, I could not see within,
For it was dark and thus my vision frail,
But then the rosy light that there had been
Became a deepest blue, whose gentle motion
Makes me no longer able to describe
What seems profane compared to their devotion,
So then to everything my sense there died,
And I into those gentle waves myself did glide.

XXIX.

Nor are these marvels all that we can tell,
For still the chamber must we yet describe,
With walls of porphyry translucent, Hell
Had no likeness to it, for on its sides
Reflected were strange writings so inscribed
That backwards could be read what ne'er is fit
For human eye to read, and we'll not try
To fathom more, lest we untimely trip
Our lives from earth and fall to darkness in our wit.

XXX..

But fate demands that vision prophesy
What already ancient poets had known,
Nor would for Dis dare any justify
That joy, the Nightingale, should leave his home,
That she into the springing plants would grow,
While he alone, translucent by himself,
Would blast with mellow sigh and endless groan,
So that it ever tried the darkest health,
When into bright sunlight and life she took his wealth.

XXXI.

Then did I see him pine about his desk,
For there of old, this loneliness his curse,
Would he engrave in fire to metal pressed,
As if he thought to fill her heart with verse,
Renewing themes upon the wedding hearse,
So to bemuse his late and favored wife,
Who may have thought that her fair heart would burst,
For men will turn with each sweet shaking sight,
But still he loved and unto her these words would write:

XXXII.

My dear, almost alone I spend the night
With thoughts of you, but they are more than thoughts,
In my imagination is the sight
Of your soft eyes o'erlaid in azure, wrought
With gold which in my heart I lock, as fraught
With gold and precious ore below, whose veins
Of light may winter in a star, but not
Above, which others sleep I watch the lane,
And wait until the long days, weeks and months will wane.

XXXIII.

When I'm asleep then you're awake, thus cold
Time conforms us all, for it and space
Conspire against us and so more bold
I conjure you on earth a faster race
Around yourself, that I may soon your face
Of love and more to warm your lips and breasts,
Draw honey from your heart, whose last embrace
I ne'er forget as we inside love's nest
Did linger and draw out of time to very fete.

XXXIV.

Put on the royal robes I once gave you
When on that new moon night our minds first met,
There is the likeness to compare the hue
Of your rare beauty, thought that you set
In fiery letters, though the lips were wet,
And told in silence simple things you heard
Inside my brain: for when all words were let
Alone, most still your thought was clear, no word
Related, only thought as then your thought I heard.

XXXV.

So thus I number, use up, another day
Until, regained again, those precious bowers
That in you lie; this dalliance of praise
Will speed the shortened seasons' powers,
For as I sing away will while the hours:
And see your image cast within my breast
Of roses, ivy, amaranth and flowers,
For there we soon will hope to find a rest
When into flowers, buds and stems myself I press.

XXXVI.

Whoever would awake from this sweet bliss,
Sure cannot say, there isn't time to tell
How long it lasts, so long as lovers kiss
I guess, but in the dark I heard a bell,
And thought that of the strange new sights of hell
I'd miss not one, so roused went out to see,
And when I left those yet within were well,
For they were rapt in love nor would miss me
As out into the passageway I passed quickly.

XXXVII.

As ghastly meditations strike the mind
Of those who've died, when silent in the tomb
They from the ways of life themselves unwind,
For then they enter in a greater womb,
Where deities of light cause them to swoon,
The peaceful and the wrathful ghosts to see,
All images they feared while in earth's room,
So now within the dark such thing fright me
As through the narrow tunnels of hell pass quickly.

XXXVIII.

The tinkling bell, the wrinkled dark, the seams
Of darkness sown, as in a critic's eye,
Are moats he'd wish to cross, but though he lean
Into himself will find no boat, so I
Give him free passage in a breaking rhyme.
Take everything and do not leave a bit,
Nor wonder if you better spend your time
In ancient books, there find a better fit,
In dusty works of old a better knit.

XXXIX.

As when in darkness one may see the light,
So down the passageway I went to look,
And wide my arms outstretched to feel what sight
Denied, and if you're bored even with this book,
Then join you in the quest, study forsook
Finds discovery, feel the jagged stone,
So hand in hand with this poor verse a crook
To guide those sheep who think what they must know,
We all with shorn and coldest limbs from life must go.

XC.

And these are lines of ordinary men,
Who eat and sleep and love and wake and dream,
Who thus remember one thing out of ten,
And even then in error they may seem
With shades to live, with idle thoughts to teem,
Utopias, Arcadias they would,
For who of better worlds would not oft dream,
And yet we this have not full understood,
For we are men who sought to grasp all that we could.

XCI.

Some letters on the darkened walls by torch
I saw, as stumbling over carcasses and bones
I began to pass into the tunnels porch,
And did not think, but still could hear the moans
Of those who tripping, fell upon Hell's stones,
And fallen once they never rose again,
Then did I first begin to feel dark tones,
When I unknowingly into the den
Of Cerberus had gone, the dog that knows not men.

XCII.

I recognized, but then it was too late,
The tinkling bell that in a dream I heard,
And feared that bell rang then my mortal fate,
That on its collar rang when that dog stirred,
But then a thought, more like an imaged word
Appeared and spoke, but not out loud, in thought,
There came a growl as if the dog had grrred,
And up it sprang and in its mouth then caught
A turquoise ring which to my trembling hands it brought.

XCIII.

What marvel is it that I am not slain,
For then I thought this terror to befriend,
As when Odysseus to spare his pain,
So that against the Cyclops better fend,
Hid in the belly of the sheep to wend
A way to freedom underneath its back,
As now unto this fearsome beast I bend,
Since him unto myself I would attach,
And in its belly's fur I placed my hand to scratch.

Peter Bracking

when you think

there is enough time left
in the rest of this yawn
to successfully
opiate a nod to thought
a snarangle of fact and the absolute
coil and uncoil
a reconfiguring of respiration

why when you begin fancying plinths
is that the time
to give up
or to reach to that pattern of stars
grab from the centre grab twice
for the sake of counting
to form light

close your mouth

library; 3 pm; weds

literary (adj.)

the library is crowded with code
26 characters deep
shelved from floor deep into the sky
arranged, reshuffled
stacks of verbs jostle for attention alongside mountains
of nouns fattened and augmented by various complementary adjectives
formulating a new complex code:
syntax

tribe (n.)

in the library at 3 pm we:
find the usual seats
amidst the haunting smell of long dead paper
and the daunting presence of the published
wait with poised pencils for the prompt and
scribble scrabble
scritch scratch
juggle all codes hoping to pierce the precise
synapse
that prompts our minds to
voice

don't wake now

what is more teeth jarring than
a late early morning siren
on the near side of the slicing edge of dawn
whipping ripping its way
to consciousness who wants
to join in its screaming serenade
gravity challenging corners
and perilous possibilities
with sleep still crusted in eyes

untitled 4

the alley reeks of piss of pain
of blood crusted syringes that threaten the stoutest shoes
of beer farts of crack that madly billows
of rock a shot blow jobs gonorrhea flowing both ways
of nightmare screams of whimpering
of clothes unwashed of crumbling feet
of a darkness spawned out of the sewer
all outside your window
a pane away from home

Post Scriptum

Denis Robillard

The Buddha runs hot and cold

1-

In the Chinese restaurant I stroke my warm hand

across the stone cold pate of the Serene Buddha.

The cold fen shuia of its ying yang repose

controls my fortune cookie fate.

2-

TWO children ate

FOUR left over fortune cookies. leaving me with

ZERO yummie prognostications.

An unfortunate math and fate equation at

EIGHT in the morning.

BROKE DOWN TREES

In this dusty book, my mind recalls
all the names and dates of generations past,
all the flesh forks that went without issue
these human leaves, roots and stems
receding back into the ground,
their seeds barren and unknown to me.

We know them only by name, these dark ones
on the annantaffel
their asterixed names leave dark dots and dashes
a semaphore for early death.

Their's was a soiled over
vertical dream that only touched the sky briefly
but never the earth.
A trod upon parenthesis vine of light
whose wishes went sideways into the dark.

In my mind, I see a broken forest line
just tag alders and brambles
a dark tangle of Gothic script
forcing their way from forest of pedigree into now.
How deep is the blood sewn into the land?
How far is the vine that contains your name?
How deep buried the bone
that time and history has gnawed and skimshawed?
Who will know you?
Who will know me when the future touches hands with the past?

A Tea Sonnet with Issa

I love to drink tea with Issa from time to time

Right now I am drinking Strong Arm tea.
Or drinking basic revenue tea
Last night I was drinking Sanora Tea
And now I'm drinking the dregs of the Iron Buddha.

Last week it was Fujian Green tea
With its fragrant aroma and mellow taste
A homely refresher and valuable gift.
It says so right on the tiny green box.

Sometimes I like to drink dank dark secret
cups of Subliminal limbs
Sometimes crenulated abstractions

My favorite old time tea is Horse Radish Infinity.
Its full bodied aroma I return to again and again.

I imagine sunshine washing the shadows of your face

leaving luminal imprints like some holy veil

or Turin shroud

smuggled in from a far way land.

while the birds in the yard

play orthographic hopscotch

on the crumbling driveway

your shadow, immutable and clear

paces across this page.

RIVER IN YOUR BONES

Sometimes we devolve into silent tactics
where only landscape remains in the wandering eye.

In tides against sleep
ideas pour forth like water from a wound.

Now it is time to write out the storm.
To seek new waters and go forth.

To duck under cold waves
and memory's dark primordial plunge.

It's all rather frightening and blue to
hold your breath and wait.

But we must all go towards the lake father.

Immersed now and cold, you strive for those furthest waters,
seek to build a life beyond the dry refuge
rivered in your bones.

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Submission and comments should be sent to Klaus Gerken, Chief Editor at kgerken@synapse.net

Submission must be in the body of an email unless otherwise agreed on.