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(notes toward the spectacle)

duration e-book 14

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We have nothing in common except the illusion of being together.

—Raoul Vaneigem, *The Revolution of Everyday Life*

All this has so much to do with grammar and with poetry and with prose.

—Gertrude Stein, *Lectures in America*

(notes toward the spectacle)

How human nouns
what the nucleus of commerce won't replicate,

the world
in a real enough window.

There were crows along the parapets,
under the awning. To consider outside,

money made of money
& the barest ankle of mine

pacing from the vault to the podium
to fasten the world's most believable cape.

What brings extremity to the territory's edge
when billboards outlining the city
outlive the shape of directives

in a little book of prayers.

What endows an anecdote with so much tinder,
a particular tree in how light fell.

How human nouns root in separation, evolve
a gentle etymology of sky, crowing after a lost original
to remain all verb:

Moon. Birch. Missouri.

Is the red thread
from her felt purse
landscape
pulled in increments

or another anchor
to architecture love.

Letters pass & the same music
silvers the flat earth of a slower century,
the hum from a shepherd's flute.

How human nouns recall movement in the house,
books, creased sheet music in a cello's case.

Because touch implies a distance
there is duration & the body's address.

A voice collapsing an animal world, while I in-
variably speak of afterwards as far in a failing discourse.

How human nouns & the dents on a knuckle
mark the hand making what will unhouse the form:

a crow, calling out of need its lineage in a single note,
a surrogate thorn, an imperfect Xerox.

Somehow we sustain history.
One hand making a fist. Two, a steeple.

Already dusk
bringing a different feeling

to the words,
something
to the scuttle of leaves.

Figuration was all I could do
in conflict with an afternoon

asking how long

before the forest burns
into later time.

An evening worn on
the locality of thinking,

imagined as a tactile day-moon,

unanchored as we are by this
animal elusion, mending
in calendar talk a mile of snow.

Little lamb that gathers & gathers
against a half-eaten idea,

I'm writing from the weather
inside a dictionary of difficult words.

hymn

the first pencil was hollow
then a cloud passed

each stone was dropped successively
until the trees were covered in a light shale

a chain pulled / a reading light

*needle, needle, sew me in,
to row, an oar, to think, some gin*

in the display window
a bee moved from each piece of jewelry

on the deck & rain fell
a red triangle / a green triangle

they took in the rigging with the bath water
they took in the stars—painted them yellow

there was, of course, a scurrying of hooves
& a type of nest in the wall

the book wasn't opened so much as it fell open
leaving a trace of warmth &—

the mitten tangled / then a voice rose

then a rose rose
they tied it to a wooden stick

the rocking made them queasy
one said, "I feel a slight nausea settling in"

another said nothing, & another, &...
the trees were silently felled

*needle, needle, sew me through
stitch his lips, his cheeks go blue*

the right of return

the book of forgetting

Sun-bleached into memory,
ribbon scars—
 a notch for the bloodletting table,
& each knot, loosened:
 ropes gone slack

Payment in a pound of flesh;
how a breath links its fingers
 —the canary quieted,
called *history gone down*
 —buried to the hilt

Extraction without a drop,
hooks & curves for tearing,
 learned retrieval,
an empty suitcase or pile of shoes,
 soot-nails & tongue-salt

The veins, a sea;
open-valved & splayed,
 two wings of red velvet
called a cool heart,
 though culled,
both blood-deep & drifting

the book of journeys

The body became a voyage,
 became the thought of god
as the beginning of a circle,
 thought that was the desert,
 that was found there in thirst

With clocks on the walls,
 the arrangements wrong,
each star seemed off kilter,
 so their maps receded,
 sent footprints into sand

Somewhere the boat disappeared
 & fires were set in a village;
some came down for the dance;
 some hid in the haylofts,
 at the river, at the mouth—the teeth,
its source: a thimbleful of silt in the eyes

One said the shore meant a corroding,
 roots beginning to show an edge through soil,
how a hole can cleave into what was whole
 like sand, like glass; the embers gone black,
 unlike a mirror or what a window knows,
but the oars, the oars were carved out of bone

the book of rebuilding

They stood at the base of the ladder afraid of its scorching rungs

The tablet they found read:

a month of fruit harvest
a month of sowing
one of after-grass

Abeyance as the space enough for a single coin

Knew they weren't always wanderers,
paid for the ferry with cracks in the walls,
with light to make out each marking:

a month of flax harvest,
of barley harvest
(a blue-inked incision line)
a month of everything else...

to ash, to an alphabet of palm-worn tools, a fistful of permanence

Call this the point of view:
the border of threads,
the locks, a language of gears,
void, unpunctuated—the round peg...
& deeper...

learned a counter motion,
an unearthing, against the theory
of stones—how they stack well

the book of definitions

The vestigial mark was the word
shadow in the preface
though they circled around the flame,
thought of this night
took form first as bone,
first a cliff overlooking the sea
called "longing for arrival"

When the youngest asked
why this hand was different from others,
another drew in his fingers & said
"This hand is called a fist."
Not to take note but to transcribe
Bells were rung & special knots devised

the book of signs

Icons were no longer icons
& their eye-sacks unlaced
In the field, testing the full range of motion
All wicks removed, each stump sanded down
Stripped of rank & arms at their sides,
counted each ring, regardless
their equivalent for the word *winter*

Collected shoes called acceptable losses,
so without hitting the bottom
the next sign read: *lasso, lash, lesson*
Still, one went on playing her violin
Slits cut in hems & bricks left unstacked
Icons were icons & the book remained open

the book of trades

Splitting leather,
recalled a place for anyone good

with a needle, with a finger...
all matter in flux

The coin, recast into a bullet,
distraction in a direct source of light

Some luck not to inherit
the features, curls thick as iron

A train like a halo took a pound
of flesh without a drop of blood

Written on loose clothing,
the book worn in the wind

the book of hunger

the sound of smoke

was that of expansion

but the breaking of bread

like a dusk-shadow

became a name

losing itself in echo

until there was no sound

but the snapping

etched into each rib

which repeats:

remember

remember

remember

Postscript: *the book of Cain*

He took the train to an empty field which was not empty when an older train arrived years ago. The book explained: *to verbify a word is to put it into action, to incinerate its core meaning, allowing it to drift.* Once, he tried to swallow a stone: "No bigger than a fingernail," he said, "no bigger." The book continued as did the weeds. The rails. The cities. The songs. The songs. The singing. ing. .

urge to call

begin with the phrase *it's light outside*

with the window, the reshaping of water

to map the shoreline between finger & figure

to say there is so much loss in the current language

anchor-ripped coral or coral-ripped hull

adjacent, resolute, an idea preceding vocabulary

the inclination of a knee to bend or body to decay

one would question sleep as one would step

an image, angled—inverted in a spoon

the subject, suspect of syntax

one tests the wind with a finger

as a ship settles between the shoreline & the lines on a map

the terms, twinned to coax out meaning

the leakage of water through slats of wood

one must begin with the current, the word *cohere*

the child who says *the window shows it's time to get up*

cloud of forgetting

Say, I—the colosseum, a statue's features rubbed clean
The concept, all wrong: snow fell & we went missing

Each word then contains many outfits; this one is called,
“& furthermore, farther on, the road curled into itself”

Say, I—the public forum & how the body melds to a chair
A bridge split in two—one side labeled enemy, the other telling the truth

Then, direction is end-stopped & history taught
as a series of paintings in which all heads are removed

The weather lifts a finger & the field empties
From fifty feet off, what look like figures in the road

Bricks, rearranged to create a “sense of place” & this cloud
resembling a Roman column, suspension rods in a bridge

They placed a wheel on the counter; buckling, a torsion—
air pockets rose from the depths as a chisel between syllables

Here is your ladder & the word dilatancy
notice how as you go up the rungs disappear

Architecture has never been idle as a circle completely filled
or night-vision, reinvented: a lisp making *self* into *shelf*

Continue to the next page & ignore what's behind the curtain:
the imperative's wax center & a magnifying glass held to the sun

I left the lion in the same locket as the lamb

Who had a paddock, had
silver filigree
a nook in which to lock away the loom

Then who peddled snake oil, holstered
a marked deck
embraced a doctrine over the weather

To obey vertical wind shear
in the Western Pacific
to close the window, something
other than the loosening of leaves
becomes a product
of the wind

Narrating nothing erotic

as a new shopping list

a garden
over the ash heap, ballast

under the railroad bed

What borders the requisite nouns:

goldenrod & red baneberry

the color of a wound
or a little rust
on a useful tool

turning marginalia

in a field guide

for the weight of musket balls

If I were to consider
only force
& the effects of force
bewildered by a nation's dove coo
then enough theory
leaves an oily bearing
in the butterfly net
& I admit I'm never sure entirely
what I mean when I mention
a deer moving out of the frame
another scope to insulate an idea
bending along a river bank, sustaining
only silhouettes against the damp walls
the aftermath in a chalked outline:

This is a Russian dance
falling from a Russian book

Here is a body
crushed by an alphabet

How is *candelabra* spelled
in a century of wooden spoons

Frightened
spelunker
of dust

when was it
you first addressed
the birds by name

drew a bow
across each letter

in hopes
of a deeper song

clustering
the impossible
annotations

the perhaps
of hair woven
by candlelight

a tenement
courtyard,
upkeep of
the hedge maze

Who walks
into a made
thing, maximizes
utility

Then who
takes down
a tool, calls
the wound dresser
ungovernable

To consider only force
& the effects of force
if a poem the size of a postcard
freight of Flemish wheat
the human face, the heart & dress
is an invention of the world
wearing an allusion suspect
the earth a synonym for self
for you are here & otherwise
then there is snow on an eyelash
there are actual lemons

This is a living moon

Underneath, the deer
has stalled into fear

the bearing, torn
through the net

goldenrod, soured
past the slow season

& we fix on the sluggish
door, on the dawn

hail all the ancillary images
how proudly they falter

how the wind chimes dance
a violent reliquary to feign belief

Too ashamed to repeat the word *endure*
to translate a commonwealth
from an illustrated history

Who came to debase the coinage
Liberty's detached head
dying a beacon to virtue

leaving the taint & flaw of a story
the worth of a stone
canned sardines & kerosene

Then who was sold
to one who wants a master
to conjugate autonomy

donning a coarse cloak
a widow's headdress
other ways to walk a life

to forget the shape of bread
work any less at gathering light
building applause for the violins

while the fiddles lay burning

If I could remove an echo

the idiom of flags

hide the dead in a different name

sickbeds barricaded with furniture

a wrist in rosewater

flaxen thread

would you keep a secret

say the instruments aged into warmth

call my first witness reverie

a falling in autumn

Felt as a mistake in translation: *leave* for *leaf*,
so the tree is an exit, a door into weather,

a symmetry in the spectrum & the stasis
of an open page. Here, morning unfolds

from moment. Recasting the body in sound.
The trace of objects. Echoes. What's

lost in the margins. Another X filling its box.
All told, a centering of sorts. A sphere reflecting

or spun to refraction. Webs, cross-stitched in the corners
& the leaves, unlatching. Desire is the watermark

of sight—a soaking-in. The absence of song
or the absence of sin. Noise isn't what's been lost

on ears, roots or dying limbs. It's impenetrable.
& this is the silence we're playing back to the sky: