THE FLOATING BEAR

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CANTICLES FOR THE HOURS: PRIME

1.

alive in the tissue of water, the round white light
is a nipple of stone in the sky.

real moon,
turn on the dust in the lightwell of water to music;
loosen the air into words that will break
like the ice, making wonderful eyes
open like flowers up through the water, breaks.

no.
this is the moon made of paper
that thinks like a mirror, & murmurs
& turns, unfinished in beauty, & flies,
shedding pictures, into the cage of the eye
entire, the womb of its time,
& hurts like laughter from women.
2.

love was plainer than air is, at night.
daylight will tighten the skin,
& stretch out the air into words;

but while the space between words is still dark
in the cage of the eye, where design
remains,)
poem, remind like a mirror.

no,
mIRRors remind me of nights,
& ask me if I am afraid.
I look for myself in the mirrors,
reply,
I know
about love, passing
back & forth, a sound
between the bodies;
is kindled like music,
grows into speech,
is caged like a word, & waits,
pacing, in sleep, knowing;

I know, yes,
I am afraid,

3.

nighttime reminds me of mirrors,
asking what is it the meanwhile
body did while it dreamed.

unable to say,
that it danced:

it squatted, &
it crouched,
&
three times I heard it say
"come back."

squatted once upon haunches;
downward-facing,
earth-regarding;
to living lover said,
come back

(at which the eye of the earth
looked reproachfully up)
crouched next upon buttocks;
upward-facing;
sky-regarding; said
to object not desired but there,
come back

(which the ear of the sky heard,
unperturbed)
squatted the third time anyhow
squatted, huddled
in the empty water, pled
only for wanting to want,
come back

(which time's enormous mouth
was seen to smile at, swallowing

come back, come back, come back

& let the triple world
be shaken like a wing
as we lean together on the centre of the air
& dance, & sing

4.
only the morning comes back:
The radial hair of the sun streaming in,
Thick & terribly straight, sweeping the cage.

look at the moon, how it fades
all day like a mirror that thinks
& remembers, filling the earth,
& slows it.

soon the real body quickens & wakes.
I love you, lie still.

is what death is,
a coming back, a
filling up of the eye,
a clearing out;
is what death is,
& echoes do;
is design.
THREAD

next,
'in the seventh generation, cease
the orderly arrangement of your songs:

remind us not to be in love with corpses,

carried in the whirlpool like a dance,
a spell where numbers of the other swimmers change to strings of (disappear in language) words to follow from word to word although the stretch is trackless where the numbers were already caught, cut, to fit impossible equations, & construct a world toward which to learn to face / to lift a face toward call it a river for flowing riverlike speech

a voice, or, watch, a play of voices

: because it is not death that language loves,
but common waking after sleep:

as thought, as a breath, like a sail
takes the wind seaward,
out from edges of the world
(with human speech so rare a thing
we have to make it up) inventing an order, or finding
in foam, even in steam, mostly in ice, crystal, in skeletons, order:
in ice, skeletons

or take a whole mountain, most is under water, but takes its name from what sticks up

& icebergs as they melt: neither like a man who almost not thinking floats in shallows, at midday the warm body buoyant, or as if sinking, not knowing that someone has straightened the bedclothes, falling asleep.

; nor not :

. where a skeleton in ice remains if it does, where a missing child's inside a closet would have kept on turning,

'But it was only a movie, dear.'

'Everything,' said Thales. He knew.

& next to know love as unconditioned reflex of the chaos that is there, which is neither order nor disorder,

thus the thread of the water until it comes to "neither heat nor cold, but their dissolution call compassion.

31.x.59
1.

because it wasn't sugar
but (a word I've found again) surprise;
& again the need to begin
in words that leave no extra taste against the
silence

is a word for meeting,
to make a horn out of gold & think of kind kings
clearing the mud of that river, those clouds

(what
if a man gets his knowledge from nowhere else
.can he give as a name to his own

mind, or

never dissolved, by water,
drifts on the river's stone-bottom
like shreds of raw silk

(seeming to waken
(because this water is not still)
the sheet-glass surface is quietly shaken
& breaks into ripples, as gulls rise
into the rooms of the hungry children
to watch the tall water close over their heads.

2.

well, old honey, back to the hard sound. 
(what's keeping you?)

I think you want it too much too
somewhere as it is between the thorough
lawfulness of beehives, & on the other hand
this spiderweb that only seems to be a figure in a plane
is central: an extension of the sense of touch.

but think of the spider as . in its own web trapped
(if any circumstance escapes yr notice
I am sure to be there to show you
nothing is going to happen
in this waste of sand, yr desert of
lapwings, or
flights of accidental
birds that cast such shadows toward the ground upon which
this is yr life, neither
here nor there,
this is yr life, neither
birds that cast such shadows toward the ground upon which
flights of accidental
lapwings, or
in this waste of sand, yr desert of
nothing is going to happen.

this matter, yr
everyday life. because yes
those forces were dangerous,
& this trap that we wd like to call a poem, then,
is not: the balance is yet to be struck
toward which, trapped in this web,
which is not a figure in a plane. look again. begin to see it
as a tunnel.

3.

or say that it is not love
but a secret that opens toward waking
forms out of words escaping into the morning
that force us to go looking after.

are you not hearing out of another
room of the house such laughter as if
we were children, making a game of the law

& this action, a going, a
doing, a making
to come into being
is a game, a dance, is
Lilala
(the play where the law stays, is fast)

is the hard part you missed
is the stone that you wished such light out of water through clouds.

26.I.59

-- Bruce Boyd
History of the Jewish Socialist Party in America

In meeting-hall, a small foyer of private house downstairs on entrance level—we're inside—me, and my friend, a square FBI agent who is arresting us all, but wants more information so doesn't take us in but lets us continue our activity, which is all internal regulations of the Party which now has very few members anyway, being, as the FBI boy knows to his chagrin, much more concerned with psychic regulation of the idealism of its members than any activity relating to the U.S. Govt.—in fact we are completely unconcerned with the U.S. Govt., and far from trying on it we welcome spies in our midst in the hope they be converted and learn something about us—since the internal structure of the Party is a mystery still unresolved even to us—a fact which embarrasses the FBI fellow still further since he guesses our general crazy goodwill and devotion to some mysterious politics of complete integrity, so extreme that the policy of the Party is really dedicated to discovering what the policy is and who the leaders really are—we being willing to share the info with anyone—even the U.S. Govt.—with complete faith that with such an open policy no harm can befall anyone, even jail or execution if further opportunity for study, revelation or martyrdom to the Mystery of Idealistic Socialism and a further chapter of the Jewish S. Party's profound activity in America—no less profound because limited to a small group which pursues the basic study, for the intensity of their dedication.

Thus we are having a meeting in the Foyer—as Aunt Rose's 1930 tho smaller—& the FBI man, with tie askew & coat over arm, sweating in summer heat, pistol in one hand & other on telephone, is undecided what to do, so I advise him, after a nervous walk in the Plaza, to trust us and wait awhile till something definite develops. He seems to agree, nodding his head, tho worried we'll all escape, vanish, & he'll lose his job & be fired by his intemperate boss a cruel power-monger named J. Edgar Hoover.

The subject of tonite's meeting was announced by President Berg last week to be a speech—a manifesto of policy no less—by an old & trusted member Dr. Hershman—who arrived earlier very disturbed, took over the meeting—not even wearing a coat in the hot nite—and announced—"The Subject of my Announcement will be as Follows—please take note and understand why I am announcing it so that anybody who does not wish to be further implicated may leave the room: Why I killed President Berg and Member Hoffman." This throws everybody into turmoil—there are only 5 or 6 members & all realize they will be held as accomplices—but maybe he had good reason, so why leave & betray his mad trust?—It's an apocalyptic Party full of necessary mistakes. The FBI man is thrown into a crisis of nerves—He is ready to telephone to arrest us all, but wants to know why they killed Berg & Hoffman—But also afraid he might be implicated (if Hershman had some important holy purpose to his act), since he too is (the spy) a member of this small Socialist Party which long ago agreed to be mutually responsible & share all guilt. If the FBI man waits he might wind up in jail with all of us, and if he don't wait he'll never fulfill his mission to find out what the mystery of the Party is and arrest us on basic evidence of conspiracy. Arrest now for mere murder means little
but regular cop crime to the FBI not a political triumph. I advise him to hold his horses & stick with us, we all want to find out.

Hershman is in the chair, talking furiously: "Comrades, Berg was a Traitor to the Party, he wanted to end the Party--because he finally didn't know what the policy was-- & he had legal power to dissolve it--I realized the danger, so did he, he invited me to address you on the subject & he also invited me to take the necessary action on the subject--an action which hadn't occurred before because a similar situation had not arisen--"

"And here is the can of Napthaline with which I killed him--gagged him & poisoned his soda water with it, & made him drink, and his co-conspirator Hoffman--I'm going to burn the evidence--in the fireplace right now!--"

He opens the (ether-type) Napthaline can in the floor of fireplace & lights it--it burns & gives off dull blue flame & great fumes of weird gas--everybody coughs--I sniff & realize you can get high on it, so I want to stick around & not call Firemen or Cops--"

"Let it burn!" we all yell--the FBI man rushes outside but I rush him back in--"Smell it & get high maybe we'll all get the answer that way! Don't give up the ship!"

The girls are nearly fainting, the can is burning in the fireplace, fumes dizzy us, one girl faints in chair, her Jewish girlfriend rubs her hands & fans her, the FBI man is sweating, Herschman is sniffing furiously,--the room is in tumult--we will all be arrested for murder--"Destroy the evidence & let's get high!" shouts the killer--on this scene of evident excitement, a new chapter of the history of Jewish Socialism nears its end & the Dream concludes prematurely.

(Fuquallpa, Peru, June 8, 1950, 2 AM.)

-- Allen Ginsberg

"Me Jedus (jesus) help me fuh fool de man! Uh put me finguh een de man' eye, en' 'e neebuh ketch me,...when de man ketch me een 'e house 'en 'e hab 'e razor een 'e hon', Cawd, tangle de man' foot, en' help me fuh git way".

-- Early South Carolina Gullah Prayer
FOR THE CHINESE NEW YEAR & FOR BILL BERKSON

One or another
Is lost, since we fall apart
Endlessly, in one motion depart
From each other.
-D.H. Lawrence

Behind New York there's a face
and it's not Sibelius's with a cigar
it was red it was strange and hateful
and then I became a child again
like a nadir or a zenith or a nudnik

what do you think this is my youth
and the aged future that is sweeping me away
careless and gasless under the Sutton
and Beekman Places towards a hellish rage
it is there that face I fear under ramps

it is perhaps the period that ends
the problem as a proposition of days of days
just an attack on the feelings that stay
poised in the hurricane's center that
eye through which only camels can pass

but I do not mean that tenderness doesn't
linger like a Paris afternoon or a wart
something dumb and despicable that I love
because it is silent oh what difference
does it make me into some kind of space statistic

a lot is buried under that smile
a lot of sophistication gone down the drain
to become the mesh of a mythical fish
at which we never stare back never stare back
where there is so much downright forgery

under that I find it restful like a bush
some people are outraged by cleanliness
I hate the lack of smells myself and yet I stay
it is better than being actually present
and the stare can swim away into the past

can adorn it with easy convictions rat
cow tiger rabbit dragon snake horse sheep
monkey rooster dog and pig "Flower Drum Song"
so that nothing is vain not the gelded sand
not the old spangled lotus not my fly

which I have thought about but never really
looked at well that's a certain orderliness
of personality "if you're brought up Protestant
enough a Catholic" oh shit on the beaches so
what if I did look up your trunks and see it
II

then the parallel becomes an eagle parade
of dusty Berkeleyites marching marching half-toe
I suppose it's the happiest moment in infinity
because we're dissipated and tired and fond no
I don't think psychoanalysis shrinks the spleen

here we are and what the hell are we going to do
with it we are going to blow it up like daddy did
only us I really think we should go up for a change
I'm tired of always going down what price glory
it's one of those timeless priceless words like come

well now how does your conscience feel about that
would you rather explore tomorrow with a sponge
there's no need to look for a target you're it
like in childhood when the going was aimed at a
sandwich it all depends on which three of us are there

but here come the prophets with their loosening nails
it is only as blue as the lighting under the piles
I have something portentous to say to you but which
of the papier-mache languages do you understand you
don't dare to take it off paper much less put it on

yes it is strange that everyone fucks and every-
one mentions it and it's boring too that faced floor
how many teeth have chewed a little piece of the lover's
flesh how many teeth are there in the world it's like
Harpo Marx smiling at a million pianos call that Africa
call it New Guinea call it Poughkeepsie I guess
it's love I guess the season of renunciation is at "hand"
the final fatal hour of turpitude and logic demise
is when you miss getting rid of something delouse
is when you don't louse something up which way is the inn

III

I'm looking for a million-dollar heart in a carton
of frozen strawberries like the Swedes where is sunny England
and those fields where they still-birth the wars why
did they suddenly stop playing why is Venice a Summer
Festival and not New York were you born in America

the inscrutable passage of a lawn-mower punctuates
the newly installed Muzack in the Shubert Theatre am I nuts
or is this the happiest moment of my life who's arguing it's
I mean 'tis lawd says it took daddy a long time to have
that accident so Ant Grace could get completely into black

didn't you know we was all going to be Zen Buddhists after
what we did you sure don't know much about war-guilt
or nothin and the peach trees continued to rejoice around
the prick which was for once authorized by our Congress
though inactive what if it had turned out to be a volcano
that's a mulatto of another nationality of marble
it's time for dessert I don't care what street this is
you're not telling me to take a tour are you
I don't want to look at any fingernails or any toes
I just want to go on being subtle and dead like life

I'm not naturally so detached but I think
they might send me up any minute so I try to be free
you know we're all sinned a lot against science
so we really ought to be available as an apple on a bough
pleasant thought fresh air free love cross-pollination

oh oh god how I'd love to dream let alone sleep it's night
the soft air wraps me like a swarm it's raining and I have
a cold I am a real human being with real ascendants
and a certain amount of rapture what do you do with a kid
like me if you don't eat me I'll have to eat myself

it's a strange curse my "generation" has we're all
like the flowers in the Agassiz Museum perpetually ardent
don't touch me because when I tremble it makes a noise
like a Chinese wind-bell it's that I'm seismographic is all
and when a Jesuit has stared you down for ever after you clink

I wonder if I've really scrutinized this experience like
you're supposed to have if you can type there's not much
soup left on my sleeve energy creativity guts ponderableness
lent is coming in imponderableness "I'd like to die smiling" ugh
and a very small tip toe is crossing the threshold away

whither Lumumba whither oh whither Gauguin
I have often tried to say goodbye to strange fantoms I
read about in the newspapers and have always succeeded
though the ones at "home" are dependent on Dependable
Laboratory and Sales Company on Pulaski Street strange

I think it's goodbye to a lot of things like Christmas
and the Mediterranean and halos and meteorites and villages
full of damned children well it's goodbye then as in Strauss
or some other desperately theatrical venture it's goodbye
to lunch to love to evil things and to the ultimate good as "well"

the strange career of a personality begins at five and ends
forty minutes later in a fog the rest is just a lot of stranded
ships honking their horns full of joy-seeking cadets in bloomers
and beards it's okay with me but must they cheer while they honk
it seems that breath could easily fill a balloon and drift away

scaring the locusts in the straggling grey of living dumb
exertions then the useful noise would come of doom of data
turned to elegant decoration like a strangling prince once ordered
no there is no precedent of history no history nobody came before
nobody will ever come before and nobody ever was that man

you will not die not knowing this is true this year

2/14/61

--Frank O'Hara
At the Off-Bowery Theatre, the New York Poets' Theatre recently presented an evening of three one-act plays by Diane Di Prima, Michael McClure and LeRoi Jones. In the first play, or playlet, "Discontent of the Russian Prince," Di Prima describes what it's like to get up in the morning, and she does it with such ingenuousness, sweetness and wit that one regrets she didn't do more with her material. For a situation is barely hinted at, a relationship between the two characters on stage hardly established, when the play ends. Very frustrating, indeed.

McClure's "Pillow" also frustrated, but in a different way: its effectiveness was dissipated by going on too long for its own good. Then, too, there was so much self-indulgent posturing on stage that it was hard to tell if McClure had a play here or not. Anyway, it seems to be about a bunch of junkies turning on, and McClure must be credited with creating the atmosphere successfully. The trouble is (as anyone who's ever had the experience knows), seeing others turn on while you're down isn't terribly amusing or rewarding.

Finally we come to Jones' "Dante," which, taken literally (it shouldn't be, of course), is about a gang-bang in an army barracks, with one soldier on the receiving end. It can be truly said that no holds were barred in its staging; in fact, it was so graphic, so specific, that the imagination had no place to go. Since the language, along with Beckett's in "Happy Days," is the most supple and evocative so far this theatrical season, it's too bad the audience couldn't concentrate more on it. The acting of Alan Marlows and Ron Faber, by the way, was professional in the best sense.

-- Joseph LeSueur

NOTICES

The fight between the U.S. Post Office and The Floating Bear is not yet settled. We'll keep you posted on any developments as soon as they happen and meanwhile want to thank you all for your help and encouragement. Legal expenses are still mounting, and your contributions are still very welcome.

The New York Poets Theatre is looking for scripts. Send them to 309 East Houston Street, New York 2, New York.

What's new: Kulchur 4, and Locus Solus 2, both available at the Phoenix Bookshop, 18 Cornelia Street, New York 14, New York.

Also, Bill Berkson's Saturday Night: Poems 1960-1961, which can be obtained from the Tibor de Nagy Gallery, 149 East 72 Street, New York City. From the Tibor de Nagy, there are still also available copies of Kenward Elmslie's Pavilions, and Alan Ansen's The Old Religion. They are all $2.00 each.