

Alan Isaacs

ECHOES AND PARAPHERNALIA

what would it be like
to have a head clearer than necessary
to sing on a morning a melody
one word over and over—enough

rather than translating messages
received over archaic transoms
like erecting turnstiles to measure the radiation
that permeates the “vast surround”

try turning off listening
drive until the highway collapses into its components
asphalt, soft in the heat, aroma of lava
spy a quivering named rabbit, white tail, under sagebrush

some roads I walked on down
when roads were roads
were golden or sold to hegemonic orders
but this sidewalk—or any

FLIGHTS OF MINNOWS

swift cold rising belongs in water dreams
silver babes in the clear clean lake

born attentive to the shadows of trolling hawks
against whom, what paltry vigilance

imagine, first and last flight
over the inscrutable blanket of pines

what is so much green and gasping
drowning in air

every needle an eye
dear mother egg what water was

what a loss is life
O diaphanous wing

help one who looks for home
precipitate

time to stop—writhing
and give myself to you

MY HEART HURTED

I think that's why she said
good morning to the orchids

and organized the wrinkles on her smock.
After I came over and into her, the sweet night

fermented, soured down into evidence.
I was sick with longing, redolent with dread,

but small, a shoestring around an acorn.
I adored a mobile, rotating stars and bears.

The hills have imperceptively conceded
to insistent erosion, comparable to one's private pain.

Squared away, resilient, yet fleeting;
grass was ocean and ocean, grass.

What's the difference?
Will you lead me down until

my mind also erodes to a pale offering?
I sat looking up and sun in my eyes and said

my heart hurted like the sun

IT OVER

in the morning before the morning
has had time enough and time
to collapse and open

and all I have is all I have
I want to leave
rises like a deadly origin

or change the change
and orderly the exodus –
the tall swart strange

comes riding slowly up
and the townsfolk hide
and now he's going to kill

the killing, he is
else sit simply amid amid
and weaponless weep

all the all the all the all
you were stranger in the dream
my soft and warm

where didst thou go
you were here, time ago
when wander sailed wonder

and the world ... adapted
your hair spread thick on the pillowcase
the windows open so the cool air bathing

it over

A BRUISED MEADOW, INDISTINCT

there once was a creature let out to feed
in a bruised meadow, indistinct
as a blind man's card

be careful not to breathe
forget to read the gauges
forget to interpret the data

when, after all, did I meet you
in a twisting, portraitured hallway
too dim to distinguish the names of the ancestors

the wood panel muted by dust
eternal in its symbiotic aspirations
practicing the matrimony of habit

imagine instead the oracle fell down, drowned in her pool
the caged witnesses fled, stunned
looking for weapons in a glare of sunlight

they turned up under the shed
a steely sheen to the encumbrance
screwed clockwise into the box

I had not to stop, a clicking wheel
penultimate lullaby, lyrically unhinged
sedated

no wonder to accomplish today
read out a list of tasks
feed the sparrow

adjust the sphincters that measure in the light
tighten the string around the tiny leg
cold beyond the window and look

creature surfaces, tracing a syntax of footfalls
an observer on the margin, chagrined
disintegrates