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the wonder in this space

aus *diese kleinen, in der luft hängenden, bergpredigenden gebilde*. Gedichte. Verlagshaus
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Translated by Caroline Wilcox Reul

portable altar I

1

when we open our eyes, a flash of light enters,
penetrates translucent skins and gels, slams
into a dark wired net

visual purple shatters

the first schematics of this world:
a gift horse with a glossy mane
and ravaged teeth

yellow and ancient

then a rupture
a rent, the birthday paper torn
you start to cry

without knowing that you're crying

and scream .. until a voice catches you
with its humming .. still so familiar
from the time of the pounding heart

and a calmness washes over

2

if you drive the fear out through a random hole
in your head, it marches silently onward like a tick
across your skull - which brays with freedom
like a drunken mule – only to bore a new hole,
a new maze of passageways into you
even closer to your limbic grail, even further
toward your holy system, even deeper
ever more capable of beheading your mule.

and yet, there is a kind of flower that makes you smile,
a kind of animal that comes and shares its warmth,
a thought that holds still so you can stop
your desperate magic, a kind of cloud
that murmurs .. for just a moment.

3

relax, breathe slowly, I know your anxious heart
is racing, your red dragonfly, you think you're suffocating but relax
you have air in you, more than you think, more than you believe
your head is shutting down and shrieking, but I'm telling you: sing
sing and marvel, feel wonder at the air that leaves you
and returns to you again like a dog or all of your dogs
who have long since died, yet still are with you
in you like a cloud of fur, even when you don't sense it ..
you ask, who's talking here? I'm your cloud made of nothing:
I belong to you at any given second, and I belong to everyone
at any given second, at any given second I can calm every single
anxious molecule in this world, every single false alarm
in this world, every single transition, and also you—

on airports and haunted rides (Excerpt)

1

the earth is a spherical spaceship orbiting, at a hundred and seven thousand kilometers per hour, a burning ball of gas like a mosquito circling a tea light in a wind-calm black wood. all the while our hair-dos, the hair-dos of ectoparasites, remain wonderfully still on our spherical heads.

our eyes are also spherical: they peer out without windshields. if it weren't for those interstellar cops - who pull us over and cash in because we're out cruising at 65 instead of 50 kilometers per hour when we were actually doing a hundred seven thousand - we'd have less to laugh about, and our laughter races around the sun like crazy happy dust.

I think about how fragile all bodies are:

a ghost in my head, a writhing hedgehog
a pounding machine-ache! when we leave the house
in the morning, our ways part for a few hours
for a day .. how easily it could turn to countless hours
uncountable days. we should look at each other every morning
and every evening as if our machines
could lose a nut or bolt just crossing
the street and suddenly fall apart ..
but this look would be unbearable every morning
and every evening, all day we'd trade our laughter
for this bleak thought, for a writhing hedgehog
for what might be a pointless ache. we need
a different way of looking! half forgetting .. but not completely
not completely forgetting .. but how? .. tell me *how?*

our mothers have dropped us off at an airport
without a suitcase, bloody and naked, the cord cut.
some take a shit right away, sticky and black
black as if the devil had stepped right out of us
and sticky as if we could never float again
which is not true – we immediately float
with an arsenal of horrors at an airport
that also floats. – our airport is filled
with countries, cities and tiny airports which are
only airports by name, in reality they are
darting specks, though words like *darting specks*
are not in reality anywhere, only particles, floating
particles that vibrate and keep vibrating
as long as we're waiting in the form of loosely connected
relatively short talking stubs, waiting
for our one and only flight, which causes our crash
and takes back our brains: not into the narrow wombs
of our mothers which have long since decayed
but rather into the pre-womb, between the thighs
of a hopefully attractive
ancient, girlish
planetary lady.

they celebrate the resurrection of the lord because they
are filled with fear secreted by brains full of miracles.
the miracle of fear is the most tormenting miracle:
every head wishes for cake and only finds crumbs
under the table .. but who sits at this table
and eats, and what has been placed on this table in order
to be eaten, whether there is a table cloth and what pattern
it has, whether there is a vase and what flowers are
in it, whether there is even someone at this table
who eats and becomes lost in flowers, in patterns
cannot be known. only this: a frightened animal
cowers under the table, under the massive table top
that blocks every ray of light, allowing only crumbs
or would-be crumbs, to fall down, in crevices
where eyes peck at them, trembling sparrows
but when they arrive in the recesses of bony skulls
as optical refraction and electrical
encoding, all these crumbs, or would-be crumbs
are transformed into the same old, inscrutable, sweet
deadly foods that always fall downward
always down and never back up –

13.8 billion years ago, in the first billionth of a billionth of a billionth of a billionth of a second our universe ballooned by ten billion billion times: from subatomic dimensions to the size of a soccer ball, so they said in april of the year 2014. our love was already etched in that big bang ball but first, suns planets and moons, the whole gravity thing, had to kick in, that takes a little while, my love. our sphere made of slapped-together stardust wasn't solid right away: but then came cells under water: lone, prancing, not yet mortal life forms .. endless divisions, pinched plasma: one split cleanly in two, no waste. after a while colonies multi-cellular organisms, the invention of the corpse: *volvox*, the spherical algae, was the first to lose her life, her body exploding at her daughters' birth. corpses everywhere! – but plants don't lose their nerves, right my love? .. not at all like we do. just think PLANTS! no love without them. like divine servants they bestow sugar and air. then animals appear: fish and dinosaurs, mollusks and birds, gills and lungs, the first drops of milk to flow from teats, the first mammals: little shadow-creatures, whooshing bodies .. yes, we still needed to take form my love: apes and people, billions of people, *lucy* and *ötzi*, broken down over and over again after just a few years by bacteria and fungus (in a handful of dirt or your beautiful shapely mouth there are more bacteria than the number of people who've ever walked the earth at least that's what they said in april of the year 2014) finally it's us: with big brains, hardly any fur drinking milk and coming of age, almost without instinct: we learn and learn, survive and find each other at last, recognize each other at last in the middle of the night, on a street in

munich, under a shot-out streetlight
and suddenly we feel – mysteriously
absurdly – indestructible and laugh
and our laughter races around the sun, you already know,
like crazy happy dust ..

conversation with a dead friend (Excerpt)

prologue

as of yesterday, I can't swim anymore
I push from the edge and fall downward,
fall head first, get lost at sea
with 20 passengers aboard
who all say nothing because
it was our friend who hit the mark
without aiming, face down, under
the surface, a floating block of ice that
struck the hull and tore it open
while everyone was asleep.
we're awake now on deck,
wide awake, we pitch over
get caught in a whirlpool because
our heads are sinking
and wish for – *as if it were a rescue boat* –
a piece of paper we can fold into a place
where we can crouch, hum softly
and color on the walls
till the fear floats away

I drank coffee with your devastated parents

or something we called coffee:
were you already different
when we sat across from each other in my kitchen
and you didn't want to eat anything
except a piece of chocolate,
did you already have an eye on the reeds?
I can't tell .. was that your way
of saying goodbye, impossible to know
if it was more than this exhaustion
I came to recognize
over the years .. *the thing in your head
that breaks your bones
whenever it feels a hankering
like you for a piece of chocolate*
I don't know .. I only know
I was much calmer with you at the table
than I am now .. with your parents
who are devastated
where I can hardly breathe
where every sip
from my water glass
makes me cough, so that I, unlike you,
won't disappear
in the water—

you shocked me more than dr. benn
and dr. benn really shocked me
with words that carved through corpses
like small blades until all flesh
hung from the bone
and nothing remained
except a poem

now you are stranded at dr. benn's
in the middle of a poem, on a table
where they open you methodically
because you lay in the reeds
for two days in your favorite lake
with your clothes on,
and I ..

I stand next to you, to your lungs
which have grown too big for your body
and dr. benn, my analytical demon,
tries to find something
with his mind dull as lead
maybe you wanted to breathe in
your favorite lake

or suddenly your favorite lake you

and even when
we pull the skin down a little
from your brow to your nose
and dare to peek into your skull
and the summer sunlight cascades in,
we are in the end - dr. benn and me
and us - my friend

a piece of paper
that is left over –
nothing more

why don't we sense it in our cells

when the systems of the people we carry
within us like rare creatures, like stalactites,
come crashing down? we feel shame
and a knot of rage
and dismay – like dull shovels
these bodies of ours mirror back so little.
our metabolism has been good
for the last seven days, we've eaten well
and had enough to drink without a trace of water
in the lungs, read a whole comic book
in the bathroom without a trace
of water in the lungs
we've slept well, slept with our spouses
felt desire without a trace
of water in the lungs
played with our kids, with the dog
even smoked and felt
relaxed after a bath
without a trace ..
not even a shiver in our cells
while a friend's lungs were filling
with diatoms, like little stones
that drag even the slightest body
to the bottom
and lay it down for the pikes
that wait alone, a touch
of sun on their gills,
and feel afraid of death
like little children
with too many teeth—

big as a tennis ball in your head

a knife could not carve it out
dark bell, kraken-cells, a cold star
that hung over you, as if it was your child,
a changeling who wanted to shatter you from the inside,
your unanswered wish
for a word
to release you, from a mouth
that doesn't exist
not in any town, not in any country
not in any hospital
never the word that you call
the most beautiful word
of all – only not meant for you
the magic word
that betrayed you:
healed

we read the newspaper for five days
and sensed nothing, you spent five days
in the newspaper as “*the drowning victim*”
“*the unidentified body in the sommersee*”
5’7” – 5’9”, male, thin, a set of keys
in the pants pocket, or jacket
it said: you had your clothes on, even shoes
and your face: *olive toned*.
as if you were from southern climes!
the ice was your homeland, an iceberg
of crystal and loneliness .. you were
not even reported as missing –
we didn’t miss you for almost a week
blissful monsters; you were too distant
for us to miss you after seven days ..
we were afraid for you too often
and became tired
like you did, and we fell asleep
like you - whole on the outside,
you lay in the reeds for two days, nights
stars over you, your shell
three pictures can be found online:
a boat that brings you ashore
two ambulances, a fire engine
as if you were only sick or injured
or burning .. in one picture
they are bent over you, two men
smoking, looking at you calmly
as if you were a rare fish—

twenty photo albums all of you
your bare bottom all over the place
a stack of pain on a table
in an apartment house, 11th floor
only child.

august first, eleven thirty
almost all birds quiet in the heat
while you were being buried
three buckets of dirt into a small hole
and a luncheon still to get through.

old friends of your parents
who order steak
and beer and begin to enjoy
and talk about vacation
on another plane than you ..

and your parents who order steak
without knowing what to do with it ..
as if they themselves had been forked up
by you .. and were now staring at you,
into your open mouth.

epilogue

you'd been dead three weeks
I was camping in the woods, asleep
when you stopped by, cheerful
in the night, to tell me
you may appear three more times

don't worry anymore

it's really

really good here ..

and you had to laugh
because you sounded like
the brothers grimm on valium

I didn't wake up,
your words were simply in my head
like diamonds the next day, then for weeks
for months, a year .. but now
they're tin with the hollow ring
of a selfie-dream .. a visit from you?
that can't be: *don't be a fool*
you stopped by dressed like him
to visit yourself, I've now so often

thought and thought and thought

I tore the dream up myself

don't wor

it's rea

rea ood

humans (Excerpt)

1

watch the earth through lenses
cut on distant planets,
lost from a massive freighter
during a flyover, unnoticed
by all earthly monitors, perhaps a hatch
or double door left open ..
an unheard of case of negligence
or an act of high mutiny
from within the crew: the desire
to initiate contact with the most primitive
cultures – the most serious crime imaginable
on distant planets. cut lenses
designed to analyze eternal
dreams light as dust, or as fleas
that drink unnoticed from eyes, perceived
by humans as distorted optics,
a changed and wondrous heart,
a sense of wonder in the eye, swelling
rippling out in concentric circles,
the bramble of the iris giving way, breaking
as if a pool of the same old
realistic views was churned
by a tiny invisible stone
into a tidal wave of fantastical drops.

the difference between a dog
and a stone
is something humans think they know.
movement and growth
reproduction and development
metabolism and responsiveness
the essential six properties of all living things
taught in all the schools
in the world. to recite
them all, to prove
why the flame of a candle is not alive
even though it flickers in the wind
is to be rewarded with praise.
10-year-olds stop talking to stones
to their dolls, stuffed animals and sticks.
their brains gradually change
from complex, filamented galaxies
to simple information superhighways
that only go in circles.
outwardly our skulls grow
as do their furrowed contents
but it's only the rest stops that broaden
not the roads. only the rest stops
mature to become greater and
greater pits where thousands
flock. in every brain all the rest stops
are mobbed, every inch is covered
with travelers waiting 'round,
millions of grown-up
tired creatures,
dysfunctionals dreaming of their childhood rooms.

every cell nucleus: a file cabinet
a universal town hall – without a clerk.
files that don't exist are not in the cell.
nothing lost from the onset: every kiss
that has ever been kissed, every smile
that has ever been smiled, every humiliation
every earthquake, every dictatorship, every war
every loving, encouraging word faithfully archived
and reproduced, distributed to millions of cabinets –
as if there had always been ikea and the secret police.
but what should I do with all these files
in me? – I can't read them, only sense them
in the depths: an impression of fish swimming
under me, 10,000 meters below, shining
through cell walls, organs and skin ..
barely distinct: shaky cabinets,
trembling dust
on a pile of transformation forms ..

how casually we begin the days

and bring them to an end, how merciless
we're a few flakes of dust from a fall
that never ends.— what I say is nothing
that can be grasped, but it can grasp you ..
last night millions of people turned
from each other with a clattering silence
so they could be right, even on
into dreams although dreams press forward
to the cliff's edge when love is removed
from electric containers. a planet of mishaps
on into dreams, of failures to see,
of missed chances. because look: your skin
is a bag of juice pulled across a field
of knife blades. or do you still believe
we will always see each other? do you still believe
we will always wake up?

and who, **who will find me**
one day? and can I even
be found under the rubble
of countless unpeopled millennia?
and who, who will find me and say:
this was a human, there, this type
of collar bone is proof enough ..
and will there still be hands that
without being hands can touch me
at the ocean floor? I dreamed of
a lonely fabric flooded
with light that holds me afloat
by thought alone, carries me closer
to a face that has no eyes
yet knows all eyes
and drinks all dreams.

exercises (Excerpt)

disappearing

1

even while the trees are blossoming
in the month of may
people vanish amidst the lilacs.

as if a blossoming trap
of freshly baked bread
were placed before a starving eye.

you'd cast a greedy glance around,
then eat greedily, like after every winter,
this bread of perfume and birdsong

which suddenly doesn't taste very good.
the light has also changed.
it flows out from behind your lids.

first the thought of a head cold
then an eclipse
until everything resets.

whenever I pass over the cemetery
for the anniversary of your death
the bushes glow like stars.

my tiny manned space station
darts around in the month of may
through a field of floating stones.

dying in the spring,
my faithless brain suggests,
is an impossible task.

I always wait for a word
from the mouth of a holy creature
from a squirrel I can call mary

but it's only my mouth
humming its hysterical tune
in the broad daylight of a dark wood.

3

maybe it's easier to die
amidst the lilacs in the month of may
while the trees are blossoming?

or is this a *trojan horse*,
a howling thought
that drives my brain to stupidity.

what is it? no reply
not another single thought
petitions for it.

and yet we still hand over
to this horse, to this trace
of a thought

our master key! –
a blossoming wooden chamber
that slowly takes shape and soars.

resurrection

1

we will rise from the dead
without perceiving
we've arisen.

we will blossom
without knowing
we're blooming.

we will be awake
without sensing
with no sensation at all.

2

death is a star magnolia

you must climb till you reach
the blossom.

once you lift yourself up in its branches
you pay for your wild joy
with silence.

your people bend
over your closed eyes
with anguished faces.

3

when you think of jesus
jesus also climbs the tree
at the very same moment

when you think of your father
your father sits in the tree
at the very same moment.

the very moment
the tree speaks to you
your mind forgets its thinking all by itself.