

the directions echoes can take

by strannikov

no Cadillac, no sticker, no mirror

rock and roll, when not sex and drugs,
when not money or cliché, was youth and hair:
twenty, losing both good and fast,
I let rock and roll down by its guitar strap.

sticking with it might have posed risks:
by eighteen I'd put down needles, coke, and stuff,
Demerol and Preludin all:
hardcore fashion twice is no encore to play.

did without guitar and amp both
for a decade and more, then nostalgia hit
the fingers not guiding their pens:
face it, a fretless bass can only sound smooth.

in its case its smoothness has slept
(I never had to spend for a hard-shell case)
now for over two entire years:
non-melodic my arrhythmia remains,

puncturing rhythms poor with prose.

Shalamov's solitary confinement in ice

his cell hacked out of Kolyma ice
Shalamov's senses slowed
hours of ice stalling sense
slowed smells
closed sounds
killed touch
froze taste
cheering the eyes or not
with no human in sight.

“solitary confinement in ice”
Shalamov's will inert
but indifferent cold—
nose froze
ears froze
feet froze
tongue burned
eyes awaiting fresh ice
with no human in sight.

commending Bunin, he wound up here
confined almost to the narrow cell
from a Ninth Circle his tour commenced.

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affecting affect, as if as is,
these trumpets don't blare, they purr
domesticating bliss.

the covers leak contents from within
stamping those covers so prett
exhales loose all the text.

toner seldom renders carpets clean,
on authority I've heard
what the color of clean.

mystery of surface is a wall,
its composition of "closed"
inscribed not from one side.

mountains don't sink, only oceans float
merriment atop their waves:
someone always must drown.

scanning horizons reveals the depths
underneath, the murk that lurks,
anglers' hooks squirm with bait.

(fish don't die, it's true, only on hooks,
but at other feeding times,
whenever glut looks good.)

memory: enliven it, or kill?
its repetitions are dull,
its novelties quite dead.

when our bodies solicit their words,
the demons curl coy in joy
at appetites of bliss.

(don't tell management you want to eat:
all you'll be given to gnaw—
menus and napkin rings.)

those other horns' bells all stuffed with mutes:
their soulful solos performed,
the emcee gets applause.

effecting effect, as if it were,
these microphones shout, they yell,
disconsoling, amiss.

