

# 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.

## **the directions echoes can take**

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.

