

the rest of sleep

by strannikov

no business of poets

discourse seeps from mouths to ears
sinking dark into our ears
to fill our mouths with stinking gas—

discourse loud from cities blasts
wholesome blather flies across all skies
leveling forests mountains all by-passed.

cities prescribe our conditions aloud
sweet tunes measured to how we'll feel
tomorrow—tomorrows sing what we knew.

(cities tell us: each other do not see.
cities teach us: each other do not hear.)

ubiquities of cityspeak
trammel all rural discourse
(their ignorance of us compounded):

for rural discourse no patience no care,
long as discourse management remains theirs
(no business of poets: it is not we).

my vocation as a madman late

my vocation of madman I test late
(test misapplications of logics late):
I escaped to wander in wordswamps lost.

equipped for a life never to be lived
all I now need for my narrow grave.

—and here I halt to test whether I see:
here words grow bright in clumps of grass—alone
in sand stands wild neglected Johnson grass.

this vivid virid life!—there curdled blooms
brittle to touch and glance granular rust
alighting on fields and pastures of dreams
and memories the possessions of ghosts.

hammers astray

our metallurgists must bring force to bear
our forges need more hours stoked hot red:
almost late to learn our hammers went astray!

hammer evaporation must be checked:
quantum diffusion we cannot blame,
did all our plugged-in hammers melt so soon?

(they could have overheated, couldn't they?)
could batteries have melted them to slime?
(self-activating hammers might hold flaws.)

look, here's a hammer not ninety years old—
where's the power source for it? where's the plug?

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peripheral dreams fall out from the head
the body squirms then burrows abed:

“have you had a good life? you now have less!
—led a hard life instead? you soon will be gone!”

the donkeys moo the horses low in tune—
hard to hear cows neigh when bulls bray aloud:
“if” is no life and has not happened once
“as if” is no better, as if sheets sleep.

solitaire women lonely dogs they keep
on walks kept short by raging winds and sleet:
“you must now give account, Mr. Bo-Peep,
for just why your wife is losing her sheep!”

today's spin in bliss tomorrow's churn fire
—and ever after they happily lived:
fun and miserable life all have shared
atop the same bed beneath snoring sheets.

they sound much better when you can't hear them
the screaming kindergarteners afraid—
loud as a spider parading in shade
as welcome as eggshells crushed in your shorts.

summon with brass winds! assemble platoons!
the consolations of—science . . . drip . . . slow:
one hundred years of blessings and of woes—
one century down, another to go.

tales fit for times fables for a stuck age
hear now the tunes to play for dire events
transpiring without consequence or change
though life takes us all though death takes us all—

then let our hungers take us to our ends:
I am hungry until, in sleep, I eat.

