Six Poems

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“Then, Not as We Were?”

Confronting a world where birds might no longer sing,
Where the wind is flagged, tired,
And the veil of darkness begins to weigh heavily upon us,
I give myself freely to slumber.

And as I do so

The harsh, the unjust, the discordant
Melt away the cacophony, leaving in its place
Residues, a single melody that all might enjoin.

As we comprehend our place in our world,
Accept,
Embrace lovingly our own responsibilities and actions
--spreading our wings for the very first time
so that we might escape the excuse of “then”

Only now are we able to cross the vast distances.

However long such a journey might take,
No matter the direction it might take us
Away from a world of inequity
--where the poorest
the loneliest and used up
all who find themselves lost or worse,
invisible to the unaffected eyes of other times, other places—
There remains an omnipresent music,

A song we learn as we bathe in the warmth of all we share,
Our humanity
Our breaking of stones and barriers alike
As we till the harden ground into a silken ash.

For if this song, once heard, goes without heed,
If we fail to raise our voices in unison
--doing as we have for centuries before, and spending our every waking moment, caught in the trap, a frivolous exercise of stringing, removing and restringing again our own instruments—
Then only silence and stagnation remain.

Better that our lyrics rise from the depths of shared truth --that infinite healing lies in the repeated refrains of the natural world--
As we grow together, --in the awkward pauses initially or overflowing leisure that follows--
Sitting quietly, face to face,

As we begin to sway to a greater song called life.

Singing of life,
Simple and straight --a reed flute, now filled with music—

One after another might leave the security of the darkest corners Leave their doors ajar,
Their mouths agape and
Their eyes opened wide, ranging freely perhaps for the very first time

And we drink with a newfound joy Forgetting our self, only to relocate,
Our reflections against the eyes of all others.

Knowing, striving, understanding As we live, we can do so without fear,
Our heads held high in

A new world,
Global and all-encompassing

Its people no longer broken up, like shards of A once-stain glass window,
Fragments of narrowly-conceived domestic walls.
Still, we must not forget
An earlier gloom, a foreboding, forbidden darkness
That permeated the very corners of our being and
Dared challenge the skies to hold dominion.

As my eyes survey all that was
All that could be, let our hearts recall the bitterness of old,
Wailing in unison with the force of the unsettling winds:

Do you not hear?
Not feel that electric thrill passing through the air
Alongside the notes of once-unspoken melodies,

Floating
Shore to shore
And beyond.

Or is it the “snap” we hear?
The voice of that trap
Its door shut, closed and tight. . .

Or worse, newer shrieks still heard among a few
Lamenting the discomforts of our world,
Recognizing, accepting

Our role
Our responsibility
Our‘bility to initiate change

Even as we see the pinchers pan in,
Close-up.
And the doors begin to shut, fast and tight.
Exhibition at a New York Gallery

Tu ne cede malis sed contra audentior ito

Raku Sculpture (ca. 11 September)

Cranes circle overhead

Elemental glaze

Anguished faces of recent events

Exposing self-doubt

The ineffable pink

A single lotus blossom

Stripped bare

Another child cries, drowned out

Rumors soaked in rain

Humanity kowtowing

Bamboo sprouts

Against the horizon

Slowly dredged from the sulphur

Pits of arms and hell
Douched in bilge water

The ancient art of raku masters
Resurrected, resilient

. . . among the ashes
Broken wishbones and charred carrion

Prey

Seattle’s Red Square (an installation)
A pristine fall gathering at first sight
No more than ten people
Swatches of red, edged white and black
Ribbons

Without words
Hands intertwined
Human circles
Formed by a
Few
The dozens, many
Friends among strangers, straggling
Silence and crashing waves repeat
Cawing of sea gulls swooping in overhead
Wiping a
Way for the tears
Overwhelming roars
A commercial jetliner passes from sight
In aerie unison
Heads snap nervous
Beseeching

A sky in the wake of calm
No peace
No hints of healing

Not yet

Relief from a world and
Uncertain promises, the terror
Knowing
We saw
What remained

Awakened forever

A Visitation (performance art)
Voluble matrons
Apathetic daughters in tow
Over deeper waters

Seizing

Women anointing
Promises of an infinite birth
Jerked out from under
Death and birthing abdication
Shaking the stars
For none and
To no avail
Threnody, Too

(To Astraea and Taylor)

Drive-in gospel

Had me waiting

Several days I

Now feel so sad—

A bad cold, every

Thing went

Through, sudden-like

And a boy loved

Very much,

Carrying me

Across sky and

Hospital,

Totally in

His hug,

Warm holds

Tighter I fight

Strength in his

Arms, feeling me

Worthies him
Self my all life
Spilled, spending
His arms
Him, no, never
I worry
None and all,
Thinking I died,
Understanding every
Nothingness, cold
Feverish, sudden
Like clear
Feverish
Jakarta Daydreams

(To Tjan and Ibeng)

parking the car
in the basement boom-box
bombed echoes, he do not know what
is going on, a bit confuse when
we see us get round windows
finding out
happening all around

offices operate with castrated precision
as usual, the
traffic, open
at one side/
--long queue stick-people stuck in drive—
slowly passing
by your embassy

so, yesterday
in Jakarta, a bom explodes
our office
a few hundred feet, metered away

white
big
clouds-like
mushroomed with heads and ears
heated by sounds like
closed thunder, our building shaking like
having an earthquake seizure
horrible, how many people
dyed batik and some even injured
peace of humans
scattering around
these places, cars
motorcycles burn
fenced ruins
leaning on diplomatic shadows
windows, the glass surrounding
the buildings mostly destroy
one, friends
hurt, peace because he worked to close, the windows
and our private TV stations used that
holes shot more cameras into/
confounded embassy

why people deal
kill in
words traded, centered
Bali-bailed J. W. Marriot
Australian-sheeped businesses
what next
looking I think
for windows and widows
and winded,
won in sluggish singsongs
now
Recognitions and Revitalizations

In a world returned,
Reinvigorated,
Where everyone is deemed vital, important

Old arguments cease to wield power,
For the very words themselves convey little meaning,
Having died out before springing from the tips of wagging tongues.

As one joins with the many,
New melodies break forth, and
Differences fade, eventual disappear
   --like stains bleached in sunlight.

As the oldest of tricks gives way and are lost forever,
A splendid synergy of voices prevail,
And a redoubtable new order is rendered in splendor.

Only then with a new morning come
Darkness will vanish
And music universal
   --like crystal-clear rains
      breaking through the cloud cover,
      pouring forth an endless stream of vitality—

And we shall not know what is upon us, or
What it is.
   --only that is not ours but remains an integral part of us,
      a perfect sweetness to off-set the bitter of earlier times.
A sense of charity in sharing reborn
Rises within the depths of our being,
And the world is created anew.

Pulled into an awesome whirlpool of
New beginnings and much-welcomed endings,
Might we revel in a newfound circularity of which we are,
One and all,
Vital.

In pleasure or in pain,
I can no longer stand to the side,
Hide in the shadows for fear of
Shrinking as I
Relinquish my old ways.

Bear witness now, as
I plunge, head-first, into far deeper waters than I have ever tread

--into a life, some may someday judge, well-lived.

And as I do so,
From the depths of evening silence,
Stars begin to smile, then laugh uproariously
As they whisper among themselves in unbroken perfection.

As our individual trysts promote a marvelously complex harmony,
Our songs swaddle the world as we might now conceive it
In blanketed sleep, restorative
   --a sleep that leads to further enlightenment
      Even as it gingerly nudges us deeper and deeper,
          And the ineffable pink of lotus petals begin to droop.

With sunlight, morning gives way to the ripple of birds in song
The lotus pushes through the murk and gloom
To rise again.

Even the butterflies stretch their diaphanous sails
Upon seas of light
As the perfumed jasmine and lilies, likewise, rise up on a crest of waves.

As the penetrating rays of light shatter golden with every cloud,
As rainbows scatter their treasure in profusion,

We find ourselves armored
   --secure with the strength never to disown or deny another
       nor bend in submission to the insolent might of injustice.

A tremendous joy possesses our hearts,
As seeds of hope become sprouts worthy of nourishing our soul,
As buds of potential blossom, giving way to individual gifts of beauty,
As the fragrance of ripening flowers spread far and wide,
Reminding all of a renewed fruitfulness and abundance
That make for the brilliant texture of the fabric of our being.

Lingering overhead,
The air grows heavy with such perfumes
--and with the sweet presence of
promises kept and renewed in union.

As old wounds heal,
We finally accept our rightful positions, together,
at once and
as one.

As we strive to make this, our world, a better place
I hear muttered from the shadows:

Is this a promise
fulfilled for one and all,
Now and forevermore.
Uninsured

Hysterical laughing, lunging up and down in bed, even the planks in the floor give way and my legs again squeeze closed, tight performing a dance meant to fool only old men to shriek not in ecstasy but lamentations echoed against four chilled childless walls with screams of blood--worse of murder--erect themselves, but ever so supple to the touch, only now supported by my two swollen hands limp and hiding the conveniences of unpeeled masks that whisper mockery, hold down my shame. No going back. Only retreats to the streets where pedicures and pedestrians tram no notice, seen drunk I despair down alleyways, stumbling into highways sideways meant for sleep and another day urged my head beneath a pillow of dizzying rings setting my ass afire sobbing before my eyes sunk deep into my head wide-opened newspapers transfixed crucifixions burnishing against storefront windows widow the hunting haunting portraits sprinkled of spectres injuring my insults, parsed without progression, direction overwhelming, viewing myself and vying for my attentions confused fashions and the lights survived chaotic intentions in hysterical laughing, lunging …