

THE POLYMATH

whoever he was there
born dropped into a city
in good cold water

Later secluded. The bayou.

A manuscript of four thousand pages,
the lines equal part lung & heart, cleaved, connate & inseparate, like the root of the Aplectrum
orchid some call puttyroot or eve-and-adam.

Speak to something
here apparated by title & epigraph
valence of delusion
spiritual theft
the fox's flyblown corpse

Speak to something
botanical knowledge
deadheading begonia
arm afflicted by ivy –
a rough patch just below the ulnar head

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a late wife
name unspoken since death
& full all the photographs burned
(a family superstition
tho he kept the daily newspapers
her marginal notations
(unfamiliar with certain English terms
strange & tender remembrance

he had advanced a theory of relation
the logic unto death claim in a sequence

had nothing at all to keep him off :
his rooms cluttered

creole of furniture mirrors books prints
Rancho Monterey & Danish midcentury
Japonisme Jugendstil a Shaker chair
Hollywood Regency
Beaux Arts & crude handmade accents
no sense of order proportion
nor harmonic principle
& yet intimate knowledge of every item
pot to boil water the only element lacked contrivance

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the hermit explicitly designated by his relation to work
outright refusal to participate
a stance we infer as principled
his being acquainted with obscure
argot of law, politics, philosophy, medicine
an earnest desire to avoid blaspheming
simply because he found it natural colorful
resorting instead to proletarian exclamation
in removing the first slice of cake
Lands! - will it stand or collapse?
Have I courted Goodness?
& if so, have I achieved?

achieved? form devoid of quality
unhip stance
capricious, Rabelaisian
when he
willing of his possessions is

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EVENINGS HE PLAYED PIANO

an overreliance perhaps on sostenuto & damper
but retained a wide inflection in the low registers
having had literal experience, episodic flooding
the blood meeting the barrier of .

In his thin suit, in the lean jag
ascends the mantle, goes to it
for witness

cedes the verse : assumes refrain
& cues the break
between subject & attendant predicate
in its period of common use—
when it was likely formed or shaped
& the ailment suffered by the artist
whereupon the lines themselves are crippled
& must be fastidiously straightened
Upon completion of a line
Decided to extend that line
back inward itself complete recursive
Boustrophedon line 4,000 pgs.
his fugue - in theory - infinite
Tho finite be the limit which is given

N.b.

The cottage itself is modest, but there is a sense in which the interior flows uninterrupted toward the garden, rendering the structure more expansive than appears. The wooden sashes of his windows remain perpetually open – it requires sleeping beneath insect netting in the summer – so that the air might move through the interior, from room to room, & to the exterior spaces & back, the latter defined by curated boundaries of vine & flower, rock & grass.

After we had passed under a trellis encrusted with Rêve d'Or roses (the pale yellow color of good raw milk) & set against a smattering of faintly pinkstriped clematis, the two of us entered another semi-enclosed space. This featured, at center, a functional, albeit dilapidated, brick dovecote (a *pigeonnier*, he corrected me with some irritation). He went in & selected one of the roosting birds, then quickly broke its neck by gripping the head & swinging the body violently in a single downward motion. This he repeated with another, & after some kitchen preparation which included a number of bawdy songs & the drinking of several drams of cassis, we dined that night on roast pigeon, artichokes, & rice.