



ALLAN JOHNSTON

Matilde

After Neruda

Matilde — name of a plant, or stone,
or wine — what is known of the earth,
what endures; word in which
the morning crescendos,
in which the light
of lemons is invested.

Within the name wooden ships are sailing
rounded with enjambments
of sea-blue firs. Its letters
ride the waters of rivers,
descant through the heart.

A name unburdened
under a tangling
like the door
to an unknown tunnel
that leads to the fragrance of the world!

Invade me with a hot mouth!
Uncover me if you wish
with night-dark eyes,
but let me navigate, sleep in your name.

Old Angel

As if enough attention weren't
already given to the hashish
or other comestibles
that seem to inherit the earth
this guy claims to be one
of God's elect, the messenger
among us, another singing
telegram. He's been trying
to espouse the truth of monuments
and apostles, and explains
the mechanics of miracles
the way Mohammed Ali pulls
off his false thumb.
I think it is to force
revision of the assumption.
Nonetheless, he knows the cost
of prostitutes, claiming
to have met a few with hearts
of gold. The guy's as old
as New Kids on the Block.
If someone doesn't bring
an escape ladder, I'll faint.
I only wanted to explain
remission as a form of admission
to the crowd waltzing its way

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through the dress rehearsal of death.
He says don't bother — been there, done that —
some such thing, and so I have
to resist the explanation
that comforts most, the sometimes smoothly
flowing hard Kentucky Bourbon,
or the blues. These are no tunes
for angels, I've been told. It doesn't
matter. Every day of the week
he appears like some foreign
minister to lay it on
as thickly as the cream cheese
on an unsuspecting bagel
and so I wait
for the miracle, faint hearted.
What else can I do? Ask Leonard Cohen.

Wild Solo

It blew wild, and the will welled
so low into the solidity
of the solace

the welkin welcomed the wished child
so the law could walk

it being every abandoned low solo
sung so slow he saw what was sewn

wheat,
the white wit of the clever
he saw sung so sewn, whetted
wink of the luring aces

each wild solo of the sax
brought back the relaxed enhancement
of the trashed out tenement

the word carried the corpse of the idea
into extravagance

also in spite of the spittle dribbled
occasionally into the instrument

he played this way, paid against death,
the pawed alternative possible
no more contingent than the operation

the band played on

HAIKU

assume the extant
next turn up the opulence
readjust to fix

explain the extant
first turn on the sensory
then let it all go

It's a wild solo
when you and that instrument
enter, new sound

if only rubber
were made to be edible
we would snack on tires

the end of the game
fans stream out of the benches
they too have been lost

Model

she liquefacts, cascades in the glow
eddies and spins, then climbs, pirouettes,
comes down, pours clothes into parallel
light while the guy with the sun mirror fishes
in his pocket for a cigarette
and makes unfathomable purrs and growls
as she guides the film and the other guy punches
his Nikon and takes in comprehensively
parried grabs as the film runs
through the camera as fast as it can
junking light a shot for each swish as it moves
and she is bored with it hair and evening dress
too hot for this heat wave
may day in new york
it shows in the way she is climbing
the steps when the cameraman turns excitedly
curving fingers forward but when
she spins her fingers become
escaping birds! They fly
into the moment she becomes then
click of her own soft commentary in the
dead calm of the dead surrounding
carnal mosaic of benches and gestures
for she is repeatable
finished and smooth as water or oil

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in the endless may day parade
she makes before the grove
a world gone rose with the ads
the grave of her image descending
as she steps in the framing eye

forgetting
all freezing