

Contain Symphonies of Yellow

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Volume II

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Barbara A. Morton

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Entropie Books
MMXVI

Eventide. Fallen. A formidable dusk. And every thing is bare. And all is yet. Fallen. In the vacant territory I find myself many miles from the city. I find myself. In an odd state of mind. I stand alone. Among disappeared vanished forgotten things. Night falls. I imagine stars ~ exactly constellated ~ and night birds ~ singing. I listen out for the birds. The birds are not singing. I look out for the birds. No sign from the birds. Even. No sign for snow. No sign for any thing. Evenso. The wheel turns ~ its ringed movement offers up a rose-phosphor ribbon ~ a perfect circumference. Amazing. For all else is barren Except for the border ~ this outlier of neon-copper projects an un-naturalistic glow. Predicts composition ~ a sign of many signs. Dawn ~ still ~ yet overcast And cold. No sign of snow. No sign of the city. No sign of any thing. And there is silence. Amid the silence a matte-pastel sky separates itself from the dove-grey earth And a new light filters these flat louvre doors. I stand before these flat louvre doors to read un-translated words They do not say closed. And yet they are not open Aside the doors ~ a narrow pathway ~ I see there are other ways of passing through. I see no thing grows here I imagine ~ beyond this shadowless landscape ~ a fertile lake and a well-nurtured pasture and small birds singing I consider. Bread. And honey. For my table. A lens opens This brisk composition contains many parts yet is not divisible into parts. Light returns. Colour is ~ luminous this bright luminous light. The laden pigment of the city expresses. This energy exchange. Sound returns or my non-hearing ceases. Every thing speaks out loud every thing has every thing to say. Except for the birds. I ask what season is this and look for the birds. There are no birds. But look a sign for snow. There was no snow. Even so ~ the atmosphere is quick and thriving. I am not called to question. This consequential past reminds me. How the world was all gone. Almost. How the birds did once sing

The miracle. The miracle of the children. Sleeping through the distraught trauma of the night. They did not hear it. They did not hear them coming to take you. Even so they came to take me. And the children. The miracle of our children. Sleeping. The feeling. A similar feeling occurred some time after when ~ sadly ~ that accident to my hand to my finger. They bound it tightly. They said a severed finger may not heal. But then again it might. I knew ~ at the point of injury ~ it was serious. I knew an irrevocable injury had occurred. The same thought comes to mind ~ that all friends are not true friends ~ that is neither here nor there. I realise that now. I realise that it makes no difference. The flower ~ I looked at it again today trying to come to terms with this flower. Also ~ I wanted ~ I was looking for ~ some exchange some thing to say between us some thing we might both understand. The flower ~ planted late spring in the old earthenware pot between times of enormous sunshine ~ all the earthy sandy soil crumbling between our fingers ~ the daily watering-in ~ then the rains of early summer ~ the saturation after. The flower was silent. Not moving. The day was fine ~ well into evening ~ I sat out ~ the wind and rain had settled many hours before ~ yet the flower ~ so natural so neutral in its disposition ~ I was hoping it would speak long time I was hoping it would speak if not to me then to itself. Some combination of experiment and curiosity. A filtration too of a lesson I read the evening previous caused me to think more intently as to the meaning of many things. The sensation awoke me ~ it was yet the early hours. I had sprayed a blend of jasmine and lavender. The room was calm. And quiet. Ideas ran across my mind. Some unusual some misgiving. A nagging worry as to how by what means of a concentrated programme of accurate breathing I might improve certain aspects of my health. Then in my head I listen to music and I imagine you are here.

A transformative theatre. The soul of his portrait
A temporal unrolling. Perhaps I imagine it. Perhaps I
imagine the strangeness of the room ~ wherein objects
~ the obvious procurement of objects ~ and undergo
this unreal ~ no ~ this unique transformation. Yet. His
portrait. In and out of consciousness. It is contiguity. It
is reciprocal. And he knows. He brings. Recovery. Of all
that would matter. And even so that fragment
of memory. Emerging. After. Not long after that curious
event. You stayed with me. We waited. We did wait ~
And yet. Fearfulness. And trembling. Are yet upon me
Are all over me. You say ~ let wisdom and knowledge
be your reason. And your good sense. And let us not
forget ~ our own days ~ like his own ~ are determined
Likewise ~ even ~ all this talk. All the goings-out
All the comings-in. His portrait. By his own. Virtue. And
he was not altogether unpractical. Each evening the bowls
were set out. Each evening. To collect it. Often I too
waited. Often I waited until he arrived. To hear him say
Perhaps. It is a myth. He came from the northland
Carried all the way from there northland notions
conveyed ~ almost entirely ~ by gesture. And symbol. And
a gorgeous vague insinuation. He was analytical ~ without
intention. He was intelligent. Art he said is architecture
In a way. And architecture ~ by the same way ~ is art
A glance at the glass. We stood now we trembling
together outwith the elaborate terrace wherein the
complicated silent trellis bears delicate twinning plants
Ashes cast before a discrete audience. And I mind ~
Dipintura ~ the thing represented. By way of colour
Marthe he said may understand. And something else ~
though it was not he ~ imagination is memory. Even ~
again it was not he ~ memory is the same as imagination
We come indoors. We return to the room. And
I return ~ and not without comfort ~ to these coloured
worsted threads and my careful embroidered work

The house of the lens grinder. I did not hear him speak
Not a murmur. Not once. The woman did speak. She
talked without ceasing. As though she were addressing
some audience. Her hair was cut very short ~ and the
colour was grey-blue-violet. Most unusual. She said ~
you two may play together until supper. We sat together
at the play-size writing desk ~ the child-size replica of
some bigger thing. The two of us fitting on to the small
wooden stool ~ the perfect height for writing at the desk
You turned the key in the roll-top and I watched
the sliding away of one thing to reveal this other. A
theatre of compartments. Two drawers. Each with their
own tiny key. A shelf ~ divided. Therein ~ off-white
pages. Cut. Quadragesimo-octavo. A drill of pencils and
a box of crayons in ultimate shades of blue. And a
copper tortoise whose lidded back un-hinged to reveal
a storesafe for postage stamps ~ all the sequenced
deckled edges. You asked me ~ what do you want to play
Silence. Play. I had not thought of it. Was it not for
something more. For something else. The lens grinder
entered the room. Quiet. Almost silent. The scent
remaining of his late supper was mulled and delicate
The lamp beside his chair. Was angled to the right. He
adjusted the cushions ~ made peace with his armchair
~ and rested his head at the back of the chair. Long
time he did look upward reading the ceiling watching
some detailed image theatre with the most curious of
intensities such curious intense eyes of the lens grinder
Reading. Watching. Some Detail. Some Image. That we
did not see. That we did not know. I did not turn
around. I sat very still. I did not want to disturb. The
lens grinder. The most curious of intensities ~ then
broken. He sighed ~ as a whisper would sigh. He took
the book from the table. Put on his spectacles. To read
Took them off. Polished them with a soft yellow cloth
Replaced them ~ sparkling ~ before his very eyes

I observe these people. The manner within which they move. How they behave. Their minds. Constantly on something else. In the garden. In the beginning the garden was very small. There was little. There was nothing. I observe these people. How carefully. They select each word. Each word. Carefully chosen. I observe these people. Their movements are precise. They are accurate. Each gesture symbolises. Each gesture. Sedulous. Each gesture. Precise. They consider it to be written in stone. We receive. Elaborate patterns on a box. Soap wrapped in parchment. I observe these people. The woman ~ I did see her. I did not see her attend to her hair. Her hair was smooth dark and shining. Combed back without fault from her pale oval face ~ secured tight at the nape of her neck. About myself. As to myself some things offend me even so they should not. Regret. A reflection on my distraction from the path ~ some digression ~ of my own making Silly really. Doing saying things I had no care to do. Thinking believing they were the correct thing to do. I observe these people. I overheard someone say ~ an encounter is a reunion. And I believe that. I recognised you the moment I saw you. Even I asked you ~ do I know you. Such meetings are rare. Even. They are unique. Everyone says so. I observe these people. Their formal manners ~ the formality of their indications Interests me. I contemplate. How they set certain matters aside. How they demonstrate these faithful acts of wisdom. Here then ~ an obscure chime of thoughts sets off the obscure chime of memory. I understand How the garden might grow. And I imagine what we might have there. At night the rain falls. Steadily. It is a dark wet night. Yet ~ as the wind is silent ~ it is strange and pleasant. To walk beneath this large old umbrella. Through the dark wet streets. With you
Who would blame us For being so close

Foreshortened. The way a journey may be. Foreshortened
A calibrated message. A hand-written letter. Then ~
nightfall. Was rich and showy. Long time we waited. For it
Then. Everyone was thinking. About Alice. And
Mother. Especially Mother. For it was well understood
~ Alice was her best friend. Alice and Mother
Inseparable. Not one of us could think of any one thing
Mother did not know about Alice. And vice versa
Alice. Folding. Smoothing. The white linen
handkerchiefs. Some with monogram. Some broidered
with forget-me-nots. And daisies. Some quite plain
Excepting a narrow lace edge. And these she folded
into triangles. The other ~ the large plain white ~ she
folded into squares. And they seemed better than the
rest. And each of us kept these aside ~ for the Sabbath
Alice un-tied the laces of her leather lace-up shoes and
fitted the sprung wood shoetrees. Into the place where
her soles had been. There they stood. To order. Two
shoes ~ a gorgeous pair ~ on the mat. Standing
Attention. Waiting for her. Waiting for Alice. It seemed
impossible that anything might be more tidy. Or neat
Alice washed her hands. Put on her wraparound pinny
~ all those tiny flowers ~ and a pocket to the front. She
went to the table. There. A perfect white bowl. She began
to peel the Bramley apples. Then. Slice. Then. Sprinkle
with Demerara sugar. She nipped the pastry at the rim
of the white plate. They called to her from the parlour
~ she came laughing ~ to have her photograph taken
Mother was already there ~ in the parlour. They had
waited for Alice. Mother put her arm around Alice. We
could see dust from the flour all over the tiny flower
posies on her apron. And on her hands. Her face. Her
cheeks. Were glowing. From the heat of the kitchen
And the stove. Her pinny splashed with flour and
oatmeal flakes. I noticed. A white tea cloth in her hand
We looked down at our palms. We were looking for Alice

He has been the perfect hero. He has been an encyclopaedia of learning. And wisdom. In order to speak of the past ~ and also of the future ~ let us return to the present. Long days have I travelled. Long distances. Made shorter. By your company. We agree The city is destroyed. We agree. The city has become something else. Something we no longer recognise. And in great conflict with the memories of our childhood. A brilliant glare calls our attention to this. Yes. There were storms. Sometimes ~ one winter ~ the snow did fall and contained us indefinitely. Your brother took the ruler from his satchel. He brought you to the door and went out. In his blue-felt slippers. He put the rule into the snow and it was taken in. Completely. Now do you understand he said. Much has been lost. Your brother All the conversations you might have had. How confused you were. How few questions you did ask. Yet so many came to mind. Most of all. Why. But. Why Later. The Gauze. Unravelled. An endless ribbon. Then Three apples in a bowl. A basin of water ~ To bring you to the water. And the oil in the water. And the noise of the water. Letting the night sky in. The dusk ~ The less the light the more the dusk and the soft soft sound of her moving in the dusk. Water running. White plates laid out for supper. We give thanks. For the sound of each plate on the table. A jasmine candle Burns all night. Snow. The colour of the flower. Falls upon us. Mute. Everything he said. Barely audible Mysterious. And the street itself ~ Silver. Exactly. The way I like it. Those days of the old town. The muffled woodsmoke. From the rooftop chimneys. The walk home. Through the all-quiet streets. Guided by the porch lights. And semi-elliptical fan lights. And sufficient they were. Those were early days indeed There had been earlier days yet still

Morning came. We watched him manoeuvre cold from his bones. An eagle appeared. In the sky. He cast an ear toward the palm. New and elongate. Time was eager And waited. In the distance ~ the tuneful whistle of the early train. Who is that calling. Who is that asks the Carpenter. Absolute phrases. Imply all these interesting answers. And a small bird employed for a sign ~ the range of his voice. And mystery. Mysterious. The tenor was lull. Until ~ the scent of lemon ~ and a small package arrived ~ from the east ~ confirmed his existence. You fixed lavender in an old earthenware jar ~ each stem sufficiently slant. I tallied white flowers of yarrow fornest delicate sky-blue yarn. The stretched linen in the tambor restored a notion of old Arcadia. All those close-counted threads. Too soon the morning of the Sabbath was taken from us. Urgent to be free of old usuries he planted twelve White Aspen. Here ~ he said ~ I shall abide. Until autumn. Still. Overtime. The lack of light did matter. Don't worry he said all such are passing. Soon past. We'll light then the torch. And consider this ~ a small bird may bury her egg in the earth ~ for safekeeping ~ while yet keep to the side small branches for her architecture. It was toward evening. All simultaneous. All very strange. We looked upon an orchard of pomegranate. Barley and camphire And all the chief spices. Yet the Aspen I said has been difficult to translate. Even. To comprehend. Then ~ light moved across the garden. He spoke a lesson. Attention said he. Let possession be handless. Repetition of exercise. Equal effort in all things. Set about your daily tasks. Do thy diligence. To come. Come shortly. Abide by the cedar tree. Beyond the cordon of pear ~ And don't be afraid. And don't be dismayed. The call to supper. Leaving. The realm of the gargen ~ And the tree did grow. I imagine him to be the Gardener ~ Don't leave me. Remember me

These summer rooms are white cloth scarred and last years season's petals darken. And scent bears heavy Heavy on the shadow of your gorgeous lips. A neighbour looks. And looks away. We acknowledge one and other. In silence. Even without a turn of the head How each day passes. So. Each new day passes. It is a strange existence. Some may well think it. Strange Passing. We walk past the street where all the houses are exactly alike. Except for the windows ~ some have palms. Some have tall glass vases with and without flowers. Some have lamps. Some have nothing ~ save the view from outside toward the inner room and the light ~ if it is on ~ revealing an other life ~ the tall man at his desk a woman running water into a kettle a small child reading as his finger underlines every precious new word. Now. At the foot of the hill. How the market place thrives. Some days we can hardly move there. Here There. For comings. And also for goings. Convinced of choice. We are. There. We choose. We spend hours choosing. It is different now. And no longer any need to ask. Today. We shall have eggs today. Look. An abundance. Basketfuls. And an abundance of shell colours ~ and Araucanas. How could we resist We bought three ~ carried them home the way a woman carries a child. Now. Home. We lay the eggs in a wicker basket ~ woven in the old-fashioned way ~ and watch them ~ and wait for them to move. Or speak. Come Evening ~ we bring white porcelain bowls from the dresser to the table. Then. Wait. A moment's observation. Some images ~ before the window ~ insufficiently stressed Neither explained. Nor delineated. By the cloth. By the body. Both opaque And magnificent in their white. Such is the way of grace. Grace. We bring the lavender-blue eggs to the table. You make a wish for flowers. And threads. For your complicated close-drawn work

It is a delicate art ~ uneasily poised between times and worlds ~ that vibrant something ~ that aggregate of colour. Ivory. Mallow. Wisteria. Then. Hyacinth. Jars of hyacinth. And wisteria. All that sensuous blue-violet mix Not to mention the exotic smells from the drawing room ~ the shades drawn for morning. Then came that correspondence. From you. Reflecting consequence Reflecting startling similarities of colour. And notions of superlatives. And thinking about his presence. The particularities. And always in the background ~ vague and spoiling ~ the way I analyse one phrase over and over. Over an other. Choosing the one I might have said. After. Changing the response. Animating the reply Even then I did continue to toss a notion back and forth. Until. The way the sky returned to greet us and she told us you have to go backward. In time. It is unusual she said you have to go toward the light ~ the light you left behind ~ and the sleep you had ~ you leave it. You go toward the light. And when you look down you will see whole continents of ice and you will see fragments broken from the mother. Broken Travelling without volition to the ocean. She told us more ~ it was more than that she did say. She said you will travel further north ~ further than you will have need. Then. You will travel inland. Once ~ when I looked down ~ there were lights. Far below. In the shape of a cross. When I mentioned to the others they declined. Then they said such sightings are normal Even so. For myself this was not so. I thought it all very unusual. I thought it exceptional. Then I enquired about the colours. And she did say there was confusion there she said ~ some saw sediment of blue-green algae ~ some saw other hues ~ curious symphonies of yellow ~ caused ~ some say ~ by sediment picked up when ice grinds down hill from the land to the sea

Late summer and the approach of autumn known by colour ~ also by scent and sound. Garden birds prepare to move on from nesting ~ a preparation for flight. A depth of sound of deeper sounds. The almost silent leaf-fall ~ that delicate movement beneath my feet. It all fragmenting. The highly localised variation. Auditory portraits. The first cool breeze of autumn ~ the soft reliability of autumn ~ her colours her sounds. A time of slow change. And imperceptible movements. Open static phrases shift ever so slightly. The pull of a starry night. Nightbirds in the tree distinguishable from the tree colours only by their occasional and slight movements Dew on the stones ~ light drawn to the stones. Light drawn to the dew on the stones. With an inverted sigh I begin a letter. I begin to write to him. Truth told ~ I began many letters ~ all unfinished all discarded all abandoned beyond the salutation. Wasted sheets of good writing paper. Sheets of good writing paper ruined Our summers can be so unpredictable. They asked me to prepare a list. Of the things I brought. As I left the room yellow-white light fell upon the tallboy and upon the photograph of father. What I had taken from the glass tray on the dressing table ~ my grandmother's brooch. The one she allowed me to pin to the lapel of her gorgeous blue winter's coat. The range of its colours equalled the brilliance of an unusual skein of embroidery thread. I took it also. And a fragment of blue-white china I cannot for certain explain why. He looked at all of these and thanked me. He turned the brooch about his hand He returned the brooch ~ thank you he said returning the brooch ~ I'll keep the embroidery thread if you're sure you don't need it ~ it is the colour of late summer moonlight upon the garden. His voice illuminated details I had passed over by day. I saw the night dew on the garden table sparkled ~ and the stones ~ flat ochre by day ~ are become brilliant glowing scarlet

After all you discover it is about locks. The time a lock will open. And combinations of variations. And keys. In a private collection. So many keys ~ bunches ~ folded into a zippered leather case. To have been out alone on Mondays. Was neither here nor there. Until. A fine grey line at various orientation draws your attention to this light steady rainfall. More gentle for the seedlings than the raging storm of the previous day. It moistens the earth. Deeply. Sufficiently. Without ploughing it all up. And the birds ~ they seem not to mind. At all Even they do not go for cover. Notwithstanding ~ Grandfather has smiled. Sweet Grandfather. Frail silhouette. Medium-sized hands. His mind constantly filled with parallel. And illusion. Those steady copper-blue eyes remind me of yours. Come. Evening. The long braid wound tight for sleeping. Coiled upward. So tidy. And neat ~ A sign for good conduct. Now. Look Shy. So shy you turn pale. That day. You made the mistake of cutting your hair. And after. Wept. Look again. All your sisters. And your mother. Your brother also arrives. An unusual one-off appearance from an only son. Time is passing. You hear a familiar voice say And there ~ Grandfather is writing. Those long letters Ink of pomegranate. And myrtle. And telling stories ~ The image of the lens grinder. The tale of the mustard seed. That curious aspect. Events. Wherein are events the brother did ask as he wiped dust from beneath his feet. En-trance ~ we watch the ocean move toward the garden. Toward the infrequent trees. And the shutters of the upstairs room close. Downstairs. All the blinds are drawn. And the murmur of the storm holds you And the storm you hold. And the lock you keep Keepsafe. Keepsafe the made leather case. And the wide heavy bunches of curious keys that you discover are all about the locks

Acknowledgements

Sincere thanks are due to the following ~

Locks ~ Prizewinning poem in the Troubadour International Poetry Prize 2016 ~
Coffee House Poetry

He has been the perfect hero ~ Published in *Abridged 0_56: Alt*, edited by Gregory
McCartney 2019

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Titles in the *White Porcelain Bowls Contain Symphonies of Yellow* pamphlet series ~

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First published in epub format
St Andrews Scotland MMXXIV

Entropie Books
Brookline
15 Comerton
St Andrews
SCOTLAND
KY16 ONQ

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ISBN 978-1-913658-24-3

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