Fall 2013

Responder

Margaret Ross

RESPONDER

Dim presence, where do we belong?
      Out in a far-flung mind I spent
      numb seconds counting possible homes. Pale self

those marble bodies of the long-ago dead
      were polished till they're sweating
      under overheads you feed

a coin into the wall to keep on. Last a minute, about. The steep white slope
      her neck cuts brightest, head flung back out of
      definition. Where her face shades out the mania begins:

are you there are you there. It's the dream of never
      needing company, not speaking for however many hours, sometimes
      days I walk up to this stone place on the hill

then back again. Wonder between. Then bunked below a man
      night air groans in and out of. There's some square heavy thing
      up on a high shelf in my chest that gets

pushed off, it keeps happening. Pigeons
      swishing just above the hostel ceiling THAT I
      SHOULD SOMETIMES HAVE THE FOLLOWING

VISION: I SAW AN after curfew, strangers' bodies harden into sleep,
      their cells charge sky blue squares, occasional chime, a guest, my skin
      gone dark. Lights off. Mornings I eat peaches till my hands stick shut,

the evenings here are bronze sieves we get sifted through,
      my habits pestled finer now, a powder blown about
      a dilute ANGEL VERY NEAR ME, ON MY

MARGARET ROSS

LEFT, IN CORPOREAL FORM, WHICH IS NOT USUAL WITH ME
        FOR THE static sequence tries to resolve: in this
        life we're little first and then the objects each get touched

by pin and air let slowly out so you might feel you're large and it's called getting
        older. But nothing changed. What I spend of life is given back to me
        unaltered, another day a slightly different temperature but otherwise

but otherwise the same. Reply the numerals ARE OFTEN
        REPRESENTED to my mind. From their stacked beds rise. Am I
        close to him? Then broke up into multiples, to restless, wireless

heights the calculating spirit tends, its
        satellite mild-gleaming in dead air no breath pollutes. Look down
        and tell me what I'm doing there TO ME AND YET IT IS WITHOUT

MY SEEING THEM the mine from which
        the marble was cut from which I was
        five. I was a child for the first time

permitted to record the message. It was in the days of answering
        machines. AND AT THE ARROW'S just wings scuffling against the roof.
        You only walk up from the square and put your coin in and the light stays

on however many cents you've paid of time. It's what
        I come to see, the glare about her
        loose white arm carved limp as tissue POINT THERE

SEEMED TO BE A LITTLE FIRE. HE
        APPEARED TO ME I afterwards begged to be walked out to
        the corner, quarter passed from fist to mouth was sour to tongue

I slid it wet into the slot
        and bought my own voice telling me I wasn't there, "please leave -

        I had a little life it was
        a pin to keep me fixed down to
        the ground a specimen in time its
        silver head my minute
        mirror to a single prick
        of color unattached

Black cashmere tightening
        its orbit at the throat of a tourist penciling the flexed
        foot of the Ecstasy in his notes. Did you feel it ring? Make me recall

my sense through varicose marble
        to convey to the changing current
        "I will let, I know the edge, I wanted to go" on

the map we used to own that was what is
        beneath me, thumbtacks sunk into
        such delicate sky-blue water. Overheard

myself in the bar where the dates are
        chipped out of the wood ask a stranger which it was
        and how many I've been gone, each one with a private ledge

and a long way down that was
        passage "that was just a number
        I told you to give you an answer."