

PAAL-HELGE HAUGEN

from *Meditations on Georges de La Tour*

translated from the Norwegian by Roger Greenwald

I

(The Hurdy-gurdy Player)

The interlocking days, the ring wall
The actual rises above you
as a brown wall, leaning
over a ravaged head

The closed eyes, the mouth's sound hole
The fist that wrings sound
from something other; a sort of meaning
Draws out what has no name
A pure note torn loose
by dirty hands

To play yourself out
of the body's prison
a pounded mortar of memories
Burnt cities Flickering desire
Shadows Withered bodies of children
A cartload of death

To play mercy down upon you, upon us
A honeyed light

for your tanned hide, for you
this slowly unfurled geography
of wounds and music

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XXXI

Overgrown autumn days.
The ochre-yellow silence
of uncut grass, of arms.
A talisman of absence.

The landscape spreads out mute
before our feet, unwittingly
beyond what's ours.

Wind-felled trees, uprooted shadows.
Small warnings. Signs, the way
birdsong thins in a solar
eclipse, touched by a breath
rimmed with frost.

It's under way.
A regiment of dreamers.
An endless caravan of nights.
A letter—which no one sends,
no one receives. Stay
here with me.