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But I held it in my hand  
a while and wondered what it was.  
Hard, smooth, its temperature  
soon the same as my own,  
too dark to see its color.  
Heavy for its size, like a D cell  
battery or lump of silver.  
Was it silver? No features,  
smooth cylinder, rounded  
at both ends, slight meniscus.  
Keep it, let it go?  
Knowledge is a terrible thing  
to waste unknowing things.  
Here, I give it to you,  
a mystery, a little warmer  
for having been held.

4 December 2013

## **THE GENDERS OF POETRY**

to tell

as much as possible

and make music of it

as it goes

or tell a little

little

and make the silences sing.

4 December 2013

= = = = =

The beginnings are waiting  
the ape in me to quiet down  
and let the calm vermiculate  
spirit of the Inside Heaven  
make with his famous aria  
already, the Heldentenor,  
Melchior of my childhood,  
famous but not yet written,  
the words of it I mean, the  
music of it older than my bones.

2.

So that's why I love opera.  
The tenor mostly gets the girl  
(the grail) but also mostly  
loses. Best of both worlds,  
triumph and crucifixion.  
Is it enough for music to get  
born? And then the evil

baritone, voice like mine,  
priest and predator. And far  
away, way above our feeble  
tessituras herself *in alt.*  
coloring the skies with  
her lucid vocalise. No words  
required, just to get started.

3.

And all this while the opera is waiting  
also to begin. The house is filled with the dead,  
the living deafened with desire, the newborn  
grizzled already with disappointed appetite—  
only music can heal them: must-music,  
chandeliers of impure sounds shattered  
all over the commodore's ballroom, remember?  
No. It's still nowhere where I am. No  
sound, no carpet, no gilt railings on the balcony.  
In free fall the mind alone with what it thinks.

4 December 2013

= = = = =

Perched on no branch a bird.

You name it, you've got  
the visual imagination,  
all the colors, feathers,  
zoology, physiology,  
behaviors, all those words  
or say the simple pattern  
around its eyes, unique.  
Imagine.

All I know is a bird,  
a bird perched nowhere.

4 December 2013

## One thing

loses another.

tell the stone  
you're sorry

even if not.  
It won't

complain, its  
stillness

is something  
of an untruth

as well, its  
molecular moment

never stops,  
it pretends

to hold you while  
you pretend

to sit on it there  
staring around you,

into the heart  
of the air, grieving.

4 December 2013

= = = = =

The open music of how it starts  
cork-lined receptacle for nested gongs  
inside pendulous reverberations as  
alchemy in the sense of skin. Sin.  
Poetry and corruption — political  
over the air and economic downtown —  
so waltz me cleanly in your garden,  
with sleek blue frustrums all lined up  
clipped from yew trees in Tudor mazes  
all set to wander there and then  
and never dare to reach the end of  
that skilled discourse of men pronouncing  
all the experimental pronouns of the heart.

5 December 2013

= = = = =

Labial is that part of me when assets  
complicate the cordial silences down there.  
Phantom prophet stumbling in the desert  
from waterhole to thornbush he sets on fire  
and names the pyre *I am here and I desire.*

5 December 2013

= = = = =

That the thing was thinking me  
was all too evident. The long south  
tending avenue past the medical school  
where once I never mind and never did  
but only the miracles of English prose  
(Vaughan, Browne) saved me from making  
lines in the sand any fool sea could smudge  
when I wanted the whole city to eat  
from my hand food it had put into my other  
you know how it is, hot in the summer so  
you'd never believe how much snow could  
challenge the beauty of art and vanity,  
o the glamor of her lips receiving information  
as if she had been waiting all her life  
for this ancient guesswork, this word I knew.

5 December 2013

= = = = =

Or I could have waited for the bus  
by the sunken vacant lot where kids  
were s who ledding down the meager slope  
thank god for gravity and the transfer  
yellow paper in my hand and years  
determinedly passed and now is now  
no snow yet and no buses evermore  
just some radiant clutter in the mind  
I offload and tell you listen sweetheart  
this is all I ever meant by music.

5 December 2013

= = = = =

*Mon coeur mis en berne*

My heart at half mast  
was sent to Switzerland  
to reclaim its silences

mountains mean nothing  
that's why they let us  
speak and be silent at once.

In the Overland I found him  
a teacher a master sent,  
himself a master and made  
me a fellow of that company  
whose business is to wake  
and wake the heart —

to pretend the body can speak  
than listen to it until it does  
to tell our long bones

in the peace they share  
with mountains. There,  
that's what the old story  
means, the world *was*  
built out of us, and is.  
And otherly we mind.

6 December 2013

= = = = =

Honey kept  
In a warm place  
for five thousand years  
is honey still,  
honey is sort  
of immortal.

But we don't have the time to live forever.  
And no warm place.  
Bee-lessly we dwell in unreprieve.

6 December 2013

= = = = =

Birds make the weather.  
Don't think about the other thing.  
Any storm is enough to begin,  
famous scientists revise the earth  
but do you listen? Hope not.  
The sickly semaphores of desire  
empurple your glance.

Do I mean what I say or is it you?  
Sign-bearer. December rain,  
day Dog, year Snake,  
Era of the common man –  
or did that end in Birkenau  
when labor and captivity were one?

One more opera to swallow me down,  
that's what you are, a smile  
made out of denial no other music.

6 December 2013

## OF LOST WORDS

1

As much as we could or be other  
as if the answer were an animal  
creeps into our tent at night  
and turns into stars above us,  
small hot indoor stars that scorch  
the faded canvas of our covering  
and give us just enogh light so that  
my hand reaching for you casts  
an ordinary shadow on your breast.

2.

But it is no animal, this word you keep  
warm between your honey-sticky paws  
—surely the right image for the right  
and left halves of the brain, a single word  
caught in between, a sagittal word prompt  
to fly from sky to heart and back again,  
swift word trapped in the cerebrum, word  
known only by its echo this mere mass flesh.  
I hold you tight and hear it whispering.

6 December 2013

= = = = =

Just because some monster  
doesn't mean,  
or the new house they're building  
secretly on the moon, those  
refugees from Paraguay —  
can you speak your native language  
can you still eat sticky rice,  
swastika flags all over the piazza?

It is a terrible world in there,  
long gaps in black basalt  
walls of a madhouse.

7 December 2013

= = = = =

Marina in winter:  
shrouded forms  
sealed from rain and snow  
boats on land  
and nobody  
playing with the river.

Behind suburban houses  
uniformly white  
more shapes in sheets.

Boats on land  
bad magic, uneasy children,  
sparrows laughing at us from the rail.

7 December 2013

= = = = =

Speak to be understood

sun on snow —

get the animal moving

one times itself

is four, your favorite number

the multiples are simple

the many in the few

linger in subtraction

until there's only you —

such stories topple slow —

among the miracles

the child murmurs to itself

fast fast to get things said

the nuance of words  
its endless etymology  
opens in your hands  
never enough  
to speak you must.

7 December 2013

still going through puberty  
still trying to find out what it means.

Is meaning the right word?  
Isn't that just a clamor to be beautiful,  
the word 'glamour' said in her lips?

What could there be to say or know  
isn't this this enough?

7 December 2013