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ŒDIPUS ANSWERING SPHINX

Listening to the flower
be it hibiscus or
mother amaryllis
I must be Oedipus
I have a swollen leg
I feel comfortable only with women
or effeminate men
I am led by the hand
through the blind streets of the world
I have killed apparently
and will kill again
I am an irritant wherever I come
my coat-of-arms is a woman's nervous smile

—But why did you listen
to that flower
isn't that your trouble in the first place,
listening to things that don't speak?
What have you done with the words
I gave you, laid one by one
kindly in your ears?

Words are just the hum of jungle
pounding in my head, buzz and whine,
even your words, whoever you are.
I listen to the random and the road,
the wall and the whiskbroom,
the things that have pure knowledge
of what they are and what they do—
and what is done to them
is done to me, my punishment
for submitting to identity.
I know all the answers
and none of them is me.

10 December 2010

= = = = =

How many chances have I had to speak
the calm mystery of waiting for nothing?
Take now this unnoticed thing
some iron you found on the railroad tracks
seemly with rust and you lift it,
a spike driven in wood worked itself out.
Sun piercing the cloud.

10 December 2010

TORCHSONG

When some time we
haven't talked
it tells a tune or so
it's hard to name

to talk us back
into together,
touch the torch
to make sure

we still have skin.

11 December 2010

VOLUNTARY

1.

Barrel organ

elegant forgettings

satin underwater

where the cormorant

dips to shop

2.

are you my mother too

think about too many

cranberry miracle

credo in ver

Zion over the river who

turkeys in the leaf-fall

I swipe thy spiel

3.

sunny day over first snow

this must have a meaning

because it came to mind

but from where

4.

I've waited too long
so all you get is me
mine angel flown
cardboard railroad
town by mirror river
wanted to wanted
but was afraid
you! how glad how hard!
come with me forever
yes she said we
drank the dream water

5.

so many cars need towing
and two flats
buy another
exiguous hotel but there
I found her
promised magic
more than many
no names please there are Christians
listening

6.

A long stayed day together
start and stumble
racecourse recourse
have no personal
use for horses
noblesse wears leather
shoes means
sin means hard
bottom a hand below
some specious measurement
come with me
let one day be a life
darling astrology
beloved axle tree.

11 December 2010

KEY MELODIES OF LAPUA

the drunken ethnologist brought home
from her fieldwork among the byt-Lapuans
she crooned one night near Saint-Sulpice
in that café on the corner, seven melodies,
one for each of the gods they practice
(sun, moon, Orion's belt, the rainbow,
Polaris, rain, mud), I mixed them up,
couldn't tell one god from another,
the cobblestones were long gone
but the asphalt glistened, it must
have been raining on the Street
of the Little Ducks, I can hear her voice
but no words and the melodies
have all faded into one long yummy
monotheistic hum. I fell in love
anyhow, we lived together till
Sirius rose above the Delta, I slung
my banjo on my back and gone.

11 December 2010

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And we have to say it
if only to the tree
we have to mean it
if only in the heart

and nobody knows
how much it means
the word we say
the star the snow
the crazy organist

the church with no
roof and broken walls
the only light
comes from our skin

sky mistakes for stars.

11 December 2010

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Caught by the tail
 but which? the word
 in English runs
 from left to right
 rat becomes rational
 before our eyes,
 language is Darwin
 lost at sea, *Beagle*
 sunk, every seed
 sick with selfhood,
 a slice of bread
 a wave of surf
 a hat full of peace—

a house for everyone
 everywhere
 eye rove¹
 and rieve in the forest

¹ Linguists are one-way streets
 but poets large piazzas
 with stupid drivers and big trucks
 elephants and goats and Vespas
 jostling to go round or cross
 because any Reader can
 make time flow backwards
 and read again what he has not seen
 (the saccades of sanctity)
 and carry the past in his eyebrows
 and eternity right beneath his chin.

naughty as Swedes
and wick our way
down the coasts of
Of.

Miracles
second-hand,
trees full of mist
this morning married the rain.

12 December 2010

=====

How many of them were they
 waiting at the gate a monster
 afternoon all sun and rain and how
 all things mingled in a mole
 peradventure Lucretius venus
 meant price of something too
 we only worship what we prize
 the praise of woman sweeps
 upholstered ears the kind pines
 the pine kinds torches sputter
 for a wedding the crackle cones
 young seed spit out the coats
 venerand and spoliare a spill of sea
 penetrate aemilian quincunx savvy
 the gender's almost always
 and the wind in the crannies come
 harsh through wainscot shim
 —always some way in.

2.

Arbarrogant quercimastix maelid
 vine, all viscum album would you
 kiss with open lips below?

(12 December 2010)

3.

Every girl has seven holes
and every hole eleven trumps
and every card a letter of the name
it is so hard to be a citizen
god's body all outsplayed as sky
uranian manners prompt to sink
thoughtful in the mire of I am.

13 December 2010

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But if they wrote right off
and the sparrows were waiting
the way they do

the seed from other
so sure
to fall from meaning
into sound, sound
at least that touches you,
how pale the sound of skin,

you are mad with the fine high craze of
daring to tell *me ama*, 'love me'
and for an hour I do,

how long is time anyhow?

2.

What shall we do now winter
or woe the shattered earth
ice crystals chock dirt
and nothing soft?

What dialect

is this. a fish
of air, a falter
of the magician's fingertips?

It is the Nine of Hearts and I have loved too much
now what will you do
two thousand years to get back from Rome?

3.
For I will do this to you
and you want it
(Tiberius on Capri)

the word is *mitted*
it travels onward inward

you told me what to do
and here it is I am

a new habit, a hurt you want to have.

13 December 2010

= = = = =

if we really knew where things are
we would be there with them
and that would be more sword
than ploughshare or a skyscraper
of a certain age upsarking
into an even older sky heigh ho
as the captive told his pet rat
the stones we live among are true
this day of every day that ever was
is night and I feel your small hands
morsing lightly on my skin
yes we will never get out no
they will not hurt us, in winter
stone walls weep for prisoners.

13 December 2010

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Can't help it want to do
a lot of things to you
your mind's just what makes
your body so interesting
how else can I get to your
mind but by your surface
that song that swoon
that infinite permission.

13 December 2010

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Admire me I am red
blue people protect me
and I am gold inside
a flower with strong legs
a bearded debutante
a flock of geese.

Now you know too much
about me you think
but everything I am
is you too and I do.

14 December 2010

= = = = =

Try another me
and this time let me listen—

that is the thunder
but that is the three a.m. freight
grinding down from Albany.
And that is the furnace
growling in the belly of the house
and this is my breath
waiting for you to answer.

Which one is you?
Stanzas are rooms in a house
but who is the door?

And why are there so many
and have you spoken yet?
Was I offering so many alternatives
I missed the one you chose?
A few tiger lilies in a blue bowl.
An alabaster cup.
Morning silence
is an answer of its own—
am I getting warm?

14 December 2010

= = = = =

A window in France
your prayerbook on the windowsill
a field outside with the donkey in it
and the three dog-tenors quiet a moment
and the long slopes at the end of sight
leading up to La Terche
where when the green is gone
the Belgians come to ski.
It is green. The good French
hardware of the windows,
solid feel of how they swing
open easy and lock snug,
double-glazed, good wood,
the good of honest work.

14 December 2010

