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A VALENTINE

for Charlotte on the day 5-Toj

A day *precious*
stone five senses
live up to your skin
the love makes
world to you

the wind calmed down last night
and the fevered chill of air took on
a harpstring quiver of spring imagined
slipping out of the trees

our little hill

be time with me

a day the precious
ornament of time
one and one only
called to be this

the claim of matter
milds us too

be time with me

our little hill

let it go by

a day

slow as crows fly

waking no other duty than.

14 February 2012

= = = = =

To demonstrate my incompetence
I keep turning in circles
when the circles are square.
Everybody goes to work at once
and I stay home.

Then I go
when everybody else isn't looking
and my work takes part in them
and they breathe for me, they
give meaning to my words

for I have none. They sit there
loving the world with their
minds elsewhere and I hear.

14 February 2012

= = = = =

The Greeks knew nothing
or nothing much about it,
skin, the way it was
the way it edged into experience so
that the person (an Etruscan word)
is an inference from their skin

a shallow inference
that makes the world

they reached out and found *rhythmos*
only the shape of the thing
shape of a woman

the hard heart of reaching out but
the knuckles, the knuckles grasp

but can't grab *chrôs*, the edge of things,
a surface that changes as the fingers sink in

(14 February 2012)

= = = = =

Don't think that all this is natural
how could it be
my hands are not my hands
the thought I think at you
so far away is only
a fraction of it mine,
a fraction you, a fraction
your skin, the rest
is all from Aristotle or
whoever last
turned on the lights.

For light
is the least natural of all.

Light is grace, the gift
from outside the organic
agony, the nightmare
we call Nature—
yet that too heals,
the disease is its own remedy.

2.

So far you are.

You sat there on the roof of the church

naked far as I could tell
and you squatted in the manner
of a child playing with pebbles
or an old man in the outback
waiting at roadside for a bus
or like a woman inspecting
closely the weaving of a Turkish
carpet spread out in front of her,
slim kilim maybe, and a devious
salesman hovers behind her—
that merchant is the sky.
You are naked with deciding.
The whole town is at your feet,
your toes curled a little in
to keep purchase on the slates.
I am afraid to ask you what you see.

3.

But even from here I can feel
the bird-infested breezes
crest on your skin
as I were this close
(my fingers touching tips)
but I am far,
But the pressure is right,
the air, the fingers of the air.

What makes the pigeons so uneasy,
their tranquil figures wheel awry,
how can you be so still and they so restless?
Where did you learn that trick
of being elsewhere?
Did your skin teach you, the sky, the silence
around you, the empty houses?
How can you be so far
when the air is full of you here
and my hands are not my hands?

15 February 2012

ASYMMETRICAL FACETING

the crystal

Spinoza-less certainty

to toy with light

a lens, a lens for a friend

the light,

the incident

animal of

or don't you believe photons are souls

hurrying their way through the Made-Up World (κοσμος)

to become us

and they gleam as they go by

and we can trap them with our eyes

and every day incarnate billions?

I believe that.

I have crouched

over broken bottles in the gutter

glad with their green

or from a mother's cabinet

the dull deep blue called Milk

*

I know that you believe.

We are broken crystals.

The porcelain chipped away
black iron showing
old bathtub on East 3rd Street
rust stained bottom
two avocado plants in big tin cans
sit there leaking into the rust
and through the pebbled
windowglass the sun comes in,
flat thick semi-gloss of leaf.

and memory is broken crystal
and we too are shattered crystals
we chink and clatter as we move
even slowly, down between the birches
watching the broken water pass

*

I'm assuming you know who you are
I will love your assumption in turn
love's what breaks the crystal
but not the ordinary love that breaks with clutching
even the love that hurts with touching
but the kind that crystals preach

the clear lines of the axes
by which sentient beings link together
hurtless wisdom
infatuate with emptiness

that's what breaks the crystal
that's what lets the little birds out.

16 February 2012

= = = = =

This small red wagon
one sits in it the other pulls it

together they go. This is *bereshith*
the beginnings, the first
thing that ever happened.

all alphabets spill from that
and no A anywhere. You are A.
You are hidden in the sudden

garden grew up around the sound
of those wheels turning
slowly over our ground.

Later you took a job
you walked to school
you left your backpack home.

Whenever people read my palm
they ask where you have gone.

16 February 2012

= = = = =

There are other miracles
abound me. Pain in shoulder
rain in the afternoon.

Tengo dolor de cabeza
he taught me. The grey
too bright. My father's
handwriting, the way
he wrote the numeral 2
like a gull flying fast away—
I know that ocean still.

16 February 2012

= = = = =

Being temporarily
near the top of the food chain
it could be better
it could be California.

Bodies lead us all astray
to the only places that exist—
the mind holds back, the little
soul that whimpers on the plane

Don't go where there is to go—
be here without the here.

16 February 2012

= = = = =

One more crystal
faceted by how we see.
Purply green a shattered glass.
Crystals with wild
cats in them, or what you see
when you look inside
I mean when you look
inside *anything*

you see someone looking back at you
and that look, those eyes
—the eyes of the Father only the Mother sees—
define you. Define me.

The broken crystal lets me out.
Plane of fracture, axis
of undoing. Suddenly
the sentence just a mass of sounds.

*

Cars move through the snow
ignorant of the crystals from
which this tricky slush descends

cars know how to go
the way children know how to run
I am weary of these vowels
that make me be.

Lips a little puckered
to speak you in,
any kiss a half-answered word.

Crystal slums
salt a cube
a handle
on the heart?
A song
spoken, a word
thumbed.

*

Last crystal of all
a slim ornament
only a filament
a hair in crystal
tunes the radio waves—
captures air
so that one hears.

It is an airy balcony
over the Adriatic Sea
between Mars and Mercury

two other lovers
one closest to us
whose true name we've never known.

16 February 2012

WAKING

Not much space
between the temple
and the street.

Staggered by light
you step out
into the cool between

the space called *galilee*
in old churches
where dreams fall away

then you're out
here with all the rest
of us who are you too

no different
sunshine things
moving all around.

17 February 2012

al-Bab

The gate the door everything is—
to see everyone as a bodhisattva
a gate out of the system

door to truth

Christ: “I am the door.”

The Ahmadis call their great teachers Bab.

17 February 2012

= = = = =

Sun after light late snow
raises mist in trees
a moment of fog under blue sky
a little cloud ascending.

17 February 2012

= = = = =

Not as desire as a fire
 but as admire as require
 a quire of paper a lyre
 lying broken in the attic
 where such things hum—
 everything leaves fingerprints

nothing sadder than all that
 unwritten paper—
 he still could write,
 unrequited raptures
 and tiger stripes of sunshine
 firing through dusty blinds
 ill-sealed against the common day

o you pierce the dark
 is what I'm trying to say
 you don't make me want
 you make me see

2.

And then the paper fell from the child's hands
 he knew he had no business up there
 reading old letters in the attic, reading blank pages
 till his head swam with otherness, love letters

the expert kisses of a long-dead lunatic

and suddenly got scared
and pelted downstairs
into the everybody else
the pale fact between
attic and cellar: the house,
the humanlife, and he
a pale amongling in sunshine
with sisters real enough
telling him what to do,
his mind quiet, closed around it,
no terror worse than blank paper.

17 February 2012