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What happened
a pretty snow she said
surprising me

my life so full of in
how did I manage
all that white?

when we slept the trees
were highlighted each
branch and twig of text

to be simple I saw
and she saw better
coming back in

shoof the snow off
and told me
more than I could see.

20 January 2012

PROTHALAMION

Find a fellow
to follow a fox
then they soon
will married be
and all the wood
resound with words
the fox will each
her man to speak.
This is how poetry
comes to be.

20 January 2012

Μελισσα

Casting a spell

a bee

out of deep need

she seeks

the rose.

20 January 2012

[A LETTER]

want to talk to you

nothing to say

we pose in front of each other

like a woman standing at a window

watching two deer

browsing through the shallow snow

tout dire

it's snowing

the woman hears something

the cat begins to speak

behind her

she has no cat

she turns and studies the dark boardroom

stretches out on the long table

where so many decisions scarred the passing hour

the cat speaks again

we have positioned ourselves firmly in the world

at either end of a sentence

we change places subject predicate

we do not verb

we never verb

a verbless continent between us

full of wolfmen and madwomen

inarticulate roar

a word is a road

i owe you something

what can we be

you tell her Listen to the cat

the cat says Whenever you say a word

you travel towards an unknown destination

only god knows what's waiting there for you

stirring already before the sound of the word

is finished coming out of your mouth

and the cat is the one animal that doesnt believe in god

I am beginning to wonder whether what I'm saying

is what I mean to say

or is it another

a younger brother of my meaning
the one who is eager
who puts on his mackinaw and rushes out into the snow

feel the snow
feel the cold
the sing of skin

sometimes everything is so long ago

I want to be firm with you
this is severity
a goddess among the Latins

and I say I am Etruscan I am lost
I am the banqueter beneath the earth
I am a voice you must hold in your hands to hear

I am beginning to wonder
I claim authority over you
I resist your resistance
I make a tree grow in the corner of your mind
a tree with seventy two different kinds of fruit
I exaggerate

you love me because I exaggerate
there are only twenty-six kinds of fruit

we have four more than the ancient Jews
because the new world is very old now
and needs new winds

down your chimney they howl

I am old enough to be just about the right height
I saw her in the movies
on the screen
and when she bent to drink from the water fountain I followed her home

there is no other story here
and it is fatal not to tell it

it's not what you think that matters but what you say

I saw Persephone in a field of blue flowers and you know all the rest

21 January 2012

ΨΥΧΗ

The Greeks saw the soul as a butterfly

it flitted from life to life
feeding on each life
and leaving behind it pollen it had brought
from its former lives

so everywhere it settled
left some of itself behind

not self no self

left behind traces of where its being had been
a long tradition of being and giving and taking and leaving behind

pollen from flower to flower, life to life

when someone dies
their presences leave behind
deeds words images tastes remembered smells

on your clean fingers the dust from butterfly wings.

21 January 2012

= = = = =

In one small day how
many faces—oil lamp
still burning thousand years—
a splinter in the sole
hobbles the hoplite—he
saw the whole night
coming towards and he ran
to meet it in her arms—
nobody lengthened a soldier
like that, snow, small
details, a wonderbook for kids
spilled in the queen's lap—
a synagogue for you and me
a ragbone telephone—
your marker's good by me—
younger brother parasol
the tentmaker spread it
said it first—where do you
buy your woes—merciless
vigor vapor my blue heart's
body talks to body
mind somewhere else
the brooding haunches
of the human project
trifling with Sorbonne airs

a petcock on an oil can,
let go of your old man
and just listen, let go
of your father and hear—
he broke your music
sly opal of self-doubt
he gave you—now smash
his window let night in
your own space air
enough to everything
your newborn speech.

21 January 2012

AQUA SICCA

Lost in Aquarius and snow.
Occultists are obsessed with money—
what else is that *dry water*
he nakedly pours from his ewer?

Young animals resemble constellations
the Arabs looked up and dreamed
implausible narratives where we
meet them in the woods and they speak.

But the young talk only with their skin.
The secret of alchemy is greed—
if you're not greedy you won't do
all the hard work needed. If you are

then the work will run away from you
like white-tailed deer over the hill—
you see the gleam vanish in the trees
and you grieve. Flowers are like that,

my yellow lilies. The shabby cars
parked around Freemason's Hall.
No guarantees. Your empty purse
is also a kind of liberation.

22 January 2012

AMERICAN MILLENNIUM

The people get fatter the cars get smaller.

Where will it end?

We'll strap Cadillacs to our feet and glide.

22 January 2012

YOU

You are not the entity
just beyond the frontier of me.

You are my native country instead—
the other is a function of the same.

22 January 2012

= = = = =

The needing the quiet
silence is a beast hard to hunt
through the sensate forest
storms frequent
 you choose

you are full of pronunciations
I spell your name
tiles on the table
our elbows are strangers
silent as skin

but that is only one you
out of many

made of grammaticals
the little words
Hjelmslev's cenomatics
that boss the real words around

stop reading and sing a tune instead
one of the half-dozen I might recognize
about love etc., or beach sex
or jewel thieves on the Riviera

I'm old luggage covered with labels
you can hardly get a word into me
but try, just to keep
this one-sided conversation
before the phone, that mighty
exorcist, breaks the spell

I want your still consenting form
to accept my emptiness

rûpân na pñthak sûnyatâ

we would be holy if we could.
Silence is the opposite.
It is not form it is not emptiness,
it's the opposite of everything

why I hurry towards it with so many words,
if I don't keep speaking
we'll never get to silence.

23 January 2012

= = = = =

The man walking his dog
does not seem as old as he used to be.
The dog is the same.

On cold days the dog wears a coat
sometimes a leopard print.

The man and the dog always stop
at the same spot on the road up the hill—
we are all creatures of habit.

He used to have two dogs when he was older.

23 January 2012

= = = = =

And what do you say today
clever friend of so many?
More words stored in this pen
than in your new flash drive.

But from this point on earth
you can reach anywhere in one line
unicursal, full of brown leaves.
To make a true Ukrainian egg cream

grasp the seltzer handle firmly, love
has its way with young and old
magazines slip off the wooden rack
minor earthquake in the Bronx

o mainland of America o radio
gradually the names of flowers
are replaced by items of apparel
studied in glossy catalogues

colors named for famous destinations
Nile green Algarve black Tampico tan
show white skin off to perfection
the text is preposterous the glass empty

but why do all the girly faces smile?

Is it a joke to be looked at

loved for your outfit, your stunning

cashmere cardigan, your faux-fox toque?

23 January 2012

= = = = =

Things are left to tell their own lies
the broken pattern the shattered pitcher
fills up with words

why did you let them in
they filled your head all night
and you woke up soiled with their meanings

who are you now, breakfast man,
hungry for a sense of being right?
In dream you lost your robe so couldn't priest—

You got sick of your children and sent them away.
But don't tell a dream into the honest morning—
now your small mind spoils the matter!

24 January 2012

= = = = =

Walking to the wall
and through
to where an urgent other waits

joyous piffle of theory
a sinister lollipop
to silence young lips

a grown-up has no past
only a cast of characters
smelly presences in the head-house.

24 January 2012

= = = = =

A radiator leaking
wrecks a parquet floor

pay a poor scholar
to walk your old dog for you

you are angry but at what
my mind is not at ease this morning

I have to purge those shady
collaborators deep within.

This is getting personal,
shut the door. I love you too.

24 January 2012

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