

9-2009

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Where the things are waiting  
in the bottomless hotel  
for us to give them names

*ash curtain*  
*foot of a fox*

the light went through us  
like a crucifix  
made of plastic glow-in-the-dark  
and dark the body was  
that was on it  
and that passed through us too

*ash canna lily*

what the moon left

written on the rock.

5 September 2009

## PLACES OF MYSTERY AND HUMILITY

There was a lady kept a dragon  
she had shaped from fine steel wool  
and fire, it stood in her vestibule  
glowing red hot wires at its snout  
discouraging visitors—  
she had too many of them already,  
they came to her in sleep  
and told her things she might forget  
the next day—nonetheless  
she'd wake up as *someone*  
*who knows something*—and the look  
of that is what you'd see whenever  
you looked at her, hardly even  
noticing her face, handsome as some found it.

5 September 2009

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Bent over the table

Spinoza labored.

Pens have points,  
must keep them sharp.

Words wear them out.

Words wear us out.

*To write words sharper than your thoughts—*

then thought must follow,

think beyond thinking.

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Is silence after English  
the same as silence after French?

How deep does any language  
gouge its world?

And when it rains  
what is left to run in the channels of words?

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We all have the same name  
but spell them different ways

there is a string for instance  
hangs from the sun to this ash tree  
imagining me

I could climb it if you could.

6 September 2009

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Nothing shocking  
just the same  
split open seeds  
the sweet juice.

6.IX.09

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Not trying to be  
just being. Not hearing  
a song just singing.

How strange your hands feel  
as if they and they alone  
handled moonlight,  
could make even you listen.

6 September 2009



## THE SUMMONS

Wait the arise the.  
Scull on Brighton reach  
the letter. Once  
send it by mail  
are we still allowed  
to read the words  
stored north of the moon?

Words own light showing through—  
they are what isn't dark.  
Something carrying.  
A paint brush slapping varnish on the door  
impatient for me to answer it  
all right I'll change my color  
I will be a protestant no more  
but go at last with the god who goes the wind.

6 September 2009

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Poems published by well-known poets  
during the long years of my own childhood  
seem ancient beyond Homer,  
strange, terrifying even. Make me  
feel I am in another world, later, lost there.  
Or lost here.

A book by Yvan Goll, say,  
soft covered, red, published in Brooklyn  
where I lived, when I was nine or ten,  
there was a war, there is this book,  
how incredible to hold it in my hand.

How short childhood is  
how long it seems,  
how few of all my years  
count as childhood.  
Yet everything was folded in them,  
ready.

6 September 2009

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Asking for truth is asking for trouble.  
Play safe and make it up  
the way the gods did so long ago,  
we almost forget our delight  
when they unveiled us the whole blue mystery  
cornfields and waterfalls, a hawk overhead.

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Sometimes a secret torrent  
tells. Sometimes quiets down  
the way late summer streams  
murmur in their sleep.  
And all of it is true.

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Slow today

like a hammer falling from the sky

coming to meet its anvil

that fell to earth before the earth began.

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But I don't want what I want.

The pain—annoyance, really—  
of having it, having gotten it, having  
to have it still. And wanting more of it,  
appalling. I will not. Looking at it  
with sudden fury, then being afraid  
of it going away. *It stays with me  
as long as I love it.* Objects in space.  
My life's a painted Dutch interior.  
But all the books have words in them  
and all the stuffed birds and foxes  
are still alive, all verbs are in the  
imperative, all nouns shimmer  
pale with putrescent desire: a painting  
of a crowded table. One more thing  
to put on the table and regard.

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A stroke, one of many  
from which the character  
is found: man  
standing by a lake  
mourning his mother.

There is a dictionary  
that explains all this  
without ever revealing  
what exactly it's explaining.  
I have never been good enough to anyone.

7 September 200

## **PLEASE, NO MIRRORS**

If I don't know how I actually look

I can go on looking how I think I look

a dark man burdened with desires.

7 September 2009



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How far are we from close,  
from cloud, from being?

Put the speeches in, or else the play  
will founder in its own integrity  
action action action.

Love is a way of bringing  
conflict into calm.  
Love is a farm where thistles'  
purple beauty overwhelm the corn.  
Adversity is all.

Apart from that  
there is only the ocean  
ceaseless, the boneless  
nattering at our shores.

When I look out there  
I think we almost are.

8 September 2009

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Did you know that crows can cross the wood?

Did you know that wood can cross the river

on its back smiling at the sky?

Did you know the river hardly notices anything we do

so in love is it with its all-consuming image of the sea?

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To know these things  
is like having drunk a lot of cheap wine,  
you sense a queasy ecstasy  
but you know it will pass

and you'll sit glumly looking at a piece of wood  
thinking This is a table a table  
there must be something both of us are for.

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But the name of the day  
is a secret name  
shared only with the oak leaf  
and the hard green walnut  
she plucked off a low branch  
by the river and he scraped  
with his fingernail and pressed  
against his hand. The color  
of these things. Days. Words  
we tell each other. Now  
he can read his skin and know.

9 September 2009

*(Richard Gartrell and Crichton Atkinson at Clermont)*

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When people walk into your life  
they become the pronouns in sentences  
you find yourself saying as you wake up  
apparently thinking of nothing at all.  
But it really will be them,  
  hiding in your language  
till you take them all the way in.

9 September 2009

## MOONTALK

His escort waits for the moon,  
he falls into her arms.

We are north of knowledge  
by a little lake  
where an old rowboat  
half-submerged  
is the house of wisdom.

How glum to be smart,  
sleek to be wise.

So weary listening—  
the moon keeps it up all night long.  
I hear him on my pillow,  
I squeeze the pillow  
around my ears,  
still can hear him:

What the Moon says—

1. Be noble as a brass clock on the mantel. Shape of an elephant, dial in belly.

2. Be beautiful like an old piano keyboard's yellowed ivory, sleek and softly stained from being. And being touched so much.

3. Forgive the priest for his religion, forgive the animal for letting me kill it for meat. Forgive me for looking into your window so many nights and doing nothing, nothing at all about what I see therein.

9 September 2009