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= = = = =

Day of corn of the ear of corn
and it looks in at me

sky
color of blue corn
yellow corn of trees and leaves and I
the only reaper of such grain
left alive after all the other
children have gone to school.

14 October 2009

= = = = =

A poet is like a librarian
a faintly ridiculous middleman
standing between
you and the real thing.

14 October 2009

= = = = =

As if the last chance for music
as if snow fell in august and the dam
broke and everyone said No!
and the weather relented,
as if things could hear us
or we could understand at all
what we hear them so clearly saying,
as if our caravan never left hom
or the owl that hoots so discretely
only now and then through the long
cool nights in summer were trying
to make us understand, but what.
Shadow of something on a clear night
autumn now flying in front of a moon
bent low with waning. As if the shadow
something were something in itself.
A wire that holds roses till they wither.
Or as if the fence around my father's grave
told me something at last about the earth.

14 October 2009

= = = = =

Cast away among millions
he mounted his matter
on a high place he thought
about the hidden venues of women
he counted agates on the beach
he preached until God found him
silenced him set him to count the waves.
Dear love poetry does such little harm
a medicine to cure echoes only
a nourishment for shadows love
it is from silence that we fall to war.

14 October 2009

= = = = =

When the revolution reaches your town
become a woman with a crow on her left shoulder
croaking softly in her ear the names of all her enemies
she has to protect and nurture and save.
Be that woman. And I will be the crow,
rattle-feathered, noisy, but the names I say clearly,
softly. Save Jonathan. Save Elizabeth.
Those who hate you keep the world turning,
your dreary friends put us all to sleep.
Then the soldiers come, haven't shaved in a week,
and cars full of commissars, who don't shave yet,
and everything is quiet except this crow.
Keep listening. He is your last hope
for opera, High Mass, planting trees in Israel.
All human culture just a bird on your back.

14 October 2009

[End of Notebook 318]

= = = = =

Here we are caught

in the street with our leaves

showing—

you hand me the cracked

leaf of a sycamore

still linked to its nut—

the one shaped like a fig

that gave the tree its otherwise unlikely name

‘fool’s fig,’ for it is large and tall and blue

almost when it stands not far from pines,

and is the last tree to leaf itself come April

and the first to let go its leaves October

as if somehow this tree everywhere on earth

were one tree only

and was very old—

like the middle-aged but terribly ancient Chinese man

who talked gently to me as I tried to compose

myself for sleep in San Francisco one long dream ago—

he stood above me and explained it was snow

and he seemed to be sad about his own destiny,

perhaps one we shared, and his lips

as I looked up and he looked down speaking

open to show the roof of his mouth all black

with some sort of factory machinery, decrepit

but still functioning, barely, beams upon balks,

and it was snowing

and the lady I whose apartment

I was staying looked up from her children—

her evidence of sin she seemed to think—

and admitted the city had no snow plows,

why should it?

And the snow outside was old,

like him, and like the dull

blue-flower-pattern-gingham floor-length skirt

she wore, her sad black hair, the quiet children,

old children,

how in God's name would I get

out of here and to the airport,

I had left it all

too late, reading and speaking and sleeping,

everything too late, everything gone,

all I could do was hold, later still, onto the dry

fool's fig leaf you showed me,

Charlotte's favorite tree, great

white tree of legend, a couple

of big ones not far from our house.

15 October 2009

= = = = =

Suppose every anxiety
is the same anxiety
one desperate angel
caught inside me
constantly translating
from image to image
hoping one day I'll understand.

15 October 2009

= = = = =

As if a different fish
swam around the home aquarium
bubbles so nicely all night long
quietly with little lights
when you can't get to sleep
it's nice to sit there
listening to the fish sleep
watching the wafture of their dens—
then this other thing happens,
a fish no bigger than the others
but fierce and quick and clearly
unwilling to live inside this tank
pounds against all sides of it
leaps up and makes the mesh rattle
that lets air in but not fish out.
Who is this angry little fellow,
reddish-brown, is he fish at all
or more like a fist, curled knot
of final desperation, a word
trapped in a stammerer's mouth?
Maybe if you get up and let him out
then you could get some sleep yourself,
a kind of payback from nature?
But where is 'out' for somebody
like him? There is no out

in his world, you watch
all his failing strategies, his
unrelenting desire to be gone.
A miracle: your eyelids flutter
and you sleep. By morning
no trace of him is found.

15 October 2009

= = = = =

The buds are bugging
new again, the snow
got promised didn't.
Chings change. The least
we do is with them.

Smug as sunshine
he thought on a leaf.
Where am I
is everywhere
breath by breath

a bird bath
on a tree's tump
blessed for simple
morning's best
architecture?

is mostly fear
of sky and what is says
it's always peeking
into foramina nostra
th' holes in our heads

soft infancy
but later ah later
some would open
from the sky inside
again to the out!

but such is mystery
while here a tiny
skittering insect
samples my old book
o my the lives

inside our lives!
somber opera
glissando pop
Baltic pirates
tuneful grump

why? am I afraid?
and you too? citizen
of what? no sonnet
solves perplexity
like common 'soap

of the philosophers' 'proof
by exhaustion' 'the Sicilian
defense' 'the Lambeth
conference' the 'Seve
Indignation' or 'Release'—

learn to play this virginal
varnished casements
on a vanished sea
your eyes are in music
born, there is no key.

16 October 2009

= = = = =

Some things do naturally end.
Be with them sprightly until.
(A squirrel hath no dignity but leap.)

16.X.09

HEAD,

keep,
clear for
the gentile howl of the howler-monkeys
schooling the lean forest—

give
headroom for hands, they
thing capably
though not prudently.

Listen through them
to what is to be kept
(this) and
what is to discard
(passive voice,
old milk,
another person's shirt
not washed by starlight)

they
wear only their own clothes—

sad whimsy of the farmer,
three thousand ranch minks
on the loose in Perigord,

o news

you bring us such salvations
(all you need is doves)
(scatter seed)
promiscuous sunlight
harassing fallen leaves.

Listen to the monkey mind
the house with too many windows
a lion on the doorsill
a man holding an alligator:
pain is promiscuous,
how come a bone
is closer to reality than the sorrow in your head
when X lies in the bed of Y?

How come
spirit never will be matter
no matter how hard you squeeze
eventually the stalwartest flesh falls on sleep
and then the monkeys come,
or are they fish?
Or did I lost the thing I meant to tell you
and have only this?

17 October 2009

DASEIN

that it said it to me
that it has the bones to stand there
in the dust of all the seas
falling inward on the broken
word I pretend to be,
a statue of what I meant,

that it said to me what could not
be spoken in any language but human
so I had to be human to hear,
hard, with all the feathers
natural to my flight, the scales
of my self-protection, the tusks
where eloquence ought to reside
but I did and I heard and it said

and I go on hearing. This
is what it is to be. To be there
in the endless act of listening
to what is not always speaking.
But is always there.

17 October 2009