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As if a calm equestrienne your cantering
policy through philosophy—
read a word, draw a picture.
Taste sugar, write an ode.
Kiss your partner, switch on the centrifuge.

Science is among you, annoying you,
reach for the why. It's hard to forgive
other people's noises. Or my silences.
I am a civilian in this war, the bombs
batter down an ordinary street –

in wars like this only soldiers are safe.
Paint me peace. Let me be your breath
taking the measure of some comely fact.
Then saying everything there is.

27 June 2008

LUTHERAN HYMN

Will I go to my death
never really having Hegel read?

I want to be good to you
so what do I do? Plenty of Plato

and all that gorgeous outcry Nietzsche made.
And how does that help you?

There must be one book of all that there are
that tells me what's behind the thing I say

and what that animal whose tracks
through our garbage heap we call meaning really is.

Desert language.
Not till the end does the verb ever come.

27 June 2008

= = = = =

There is something to a sky
not just wondering.

What I read, I understood—
that was you, wasn't it,

talking to me even then.
In me. How could you know,

how could I even now be
so sure of it as I am.

An orange crate of soft white wood
a staircase in the dark, the box upended,

two shelves for my few books.
It was you then, wasn't it,

the only one who ever told me things
that were my things, not just stuff

that other people did but things for me
that I was supposed to do and be.

And am, somehow, no time ever having passed,
still listening. The stairs are always dark.

There is effort, and always argument.
One sits still, alone, with what one knows.

28 June 2008

[Rebecca Chadwick]

[Robert Kelly]

Ode: Resiliency

Something must be forked over.
I am uncertain about

the pricing. You caused the
grocery store's chilled apples

to bruise as you brushed past.
I am not sure about

all this. Your response may
fail. A hiss I will not hear

among the produce. It is
a shame how my fear has

grown easy.

But am I the one
so many people are bothered by

ways I sign my name in the
ordinary flesh

paying attention to other situations
things that aren't me

furrow something, make something
in the heart's commotion

cool and green in there, still
faded, it was how I knew myself best

now, as if I were somebody else.

28 June 2008

AS OF AN ORACLE, SMALL

Catch some of it ready to be going.

Who speaks?

The answerman from nine years old.

Another?

I am the same man, For instance:

Guanche
is the language that they whistle in
or really from.

Canary Islands.

The same. You said it, kid. I am the same man you were.

But was I ever?

You were never not.

So what is this about going?

Every September gets born a little more until

Till what?

A hill topples over, a sea stumbles, a meadow falls.

But will I prosper?

Depends on the question.

You're right,

I shouldn't be asking about me,
should I,
only about real things,

the capital of North Dakota, the current
population of Khartoum,
the atomic number of cadmium?

You said it. Those
are the things I know,
the things you are permitted to attend,

as if they were ceremonies
at some school or better
a drunken prom

and its aftermath behind the shrubbery
when little by little you learn
to put a name to everything.

What *are* the Thirty-Nine Steps?

The thirty seven practices of all Bodhisattvas, plus you and me.

Are we two?

Tangowise you bet.

Does it always have to joke or be funny or coarse at the end?

It is the way we laugh when someone's pants fall down,
the simple truth is ridiculous,
the civil ceremony requires lies.

Why are there so many words for what I wont do?

Successful failures in moonlight last forever—
(I'm translating from the Tocharian.)

Do they still speak that anywhere?

Only in your head, and poorly.
Those roots you count
and chew and water and regret,

those gaunt etymologies
you hang your whimsies on,
but no breath in you to talk.

But why can't I speak it?

There is a language everybody knows and no one speaks.

Is all I'm good for asking questions?

All that anybody is.

It's sun but who knows who?

That's not a question, it's words in your head.

Shouldn't I believe what I hear inside?

You should ask yourself: Inside what.

Doesn't inside always mean inside me,
inside the one who says inside?

People will say anything.
Don't be so sure there is any difference
between inside and outside.

Where do Blake's Tygers live, then?

A good point – they live in language. right where you both found him.

Him?

The Tyger – there's only one.

Should I worship something that has such a bite?

A tyger is not a biting thing – that would be a tiger;
look at the picture Blake made:

a tyger is a thing to *see*.

But should I worship?

There are perhaps gods closer to hand
for you to adore.

And be adored by,
it could even be,
in blazing stripes of mutuality.

But should I *worship*?

What else do you have to do?

29 June 2008

LAST SONNET

Something battering the bar. Socket
of the wrist bone. Condyle? Sport scar?
You don't hear good when you can't dance.
Something with the ankle. Got it at the barber.

You still go to one of those, I hate an old man
fingers on me know what I mean. Please.
Please. This is a song I know you know
you got to keep time with me in it see

otherwise the words won't come out right
and nobody knows who loves who
and that's not just nitpicking it's the point

this girl loves him but he's not sure
you know the way we are and then he is
but now it's too late and what can you do?

30 June 2008

THE BLIND MAN SETS OUT TO CROSS THE STREAM

CHORUS

[this is what the blind man hears]

Not no. Not know.

No know.

Ing the way. Fertile

isle. Fertility.

We all were, we are.

We see, hence we.

I see to be.

THE BLIND MAN

[The blind man totters forward, feels the scenery, touches the little pine tree, caresses the wall.]

Ah, it is good to be

even when I don't.

Motion is all!

A Martian please it is,

left when all the water's

gone from my eyes,

locked away

in mere awareness somewhere,

somewhere else,

earthjuice, lachrymals

of me,

I cannot see but I can weep.

[Having said that, he stands more upright. Stronger seeming, still not seeing. Younger. Though tender.]

Because I can move around

they say I am a being:

a living being

and that I be.

{Tibetan 'gro-ba, "dro-wa"}

What a definition!

Dumb! But right!

I prove myself myself

constantly

even when you are not there
to see me be.

[Pause while he wanders around, blind-man's-buff style, seeking someone to touch.]

Are you?

Are you? I can feel
a trembling in the wood—
that might be you,

I can feel the grain of the tree trunk,
it reminds me of your breath,
now my fingers are sticky with sap,

are you there so that I also
rise to you? Are you close enough
to hear me breathing.

CHORUS

He thinks in contention with himself
unsure, I think I am myself
in contention with myself

all my bodies do not know
where his will wants in me to go.
Why do we embed in us
the will of another?
A blind man's will – how terrifying!

[The blind man keeps feeling around, touching things – he comes close to touching the people in the chorus, but always fails to make contact.]

Sometimes one or two of them will reach out arm or leg as if you give him something to find, but he always misses it.]

THE BLIND MAN

All this Martian influence—
we send our scooters up and do there digge—
they send back dead weird ideas
frozen a million years beneath the words.
We blind folk read them easy, easy,
all that stuff about the Hollow Vault
in which we move, the mirror of it
even bigger, the Hollow Sky inside the heart,
the floodless lake, the incandescent
dark that teaches those who fail to see,

teach us not to be
so much,
tamp down in us
all this being stuff,

[calls out, louder and louder:]
sein und seiend, Scheisse, Scheisse!

*[He slumps down and sits with his back to the tree wall, a little turned away
from the audience.]*

This isn't about me.
I'm just the man from Mars
blankfooted in your garden, honey.

CHORUS

They used to call
like crows
call him long or her
too one
person wearing two hats

or two men wearing one hat?
Which one?
Bring a ladder
bring an axe,
bribe the children
with a movie,

go to church
and take off your hat,

faith, that's the one
good thing about a church,
you take your hat off
when you go in.

But o my God what a fearsome thing!
What thing is that?
A fearsome thing a blind man's hat,

a land all dollar signs and ampersands,
the country's right it's us that's wrong.

[The blind man is finally irritated by all this choral gossip, and lashes out:]

THE BLIND MAN

Silence, rowdies!
Go back to your Sirius, your piecemeal noise,
your little boxes that buy music,
o I know, you can't fool me,
all that song is coming from your skin,
you can't fool me: I have held them in my hand!

CHORUS

Pipe down, reverend Sir,
we want no trouble
from the unlikes of you
or other, we're just some birdies
bellow in the bush,
just some books that read themselves
outloud, some wind on your anklebones
hushed in your oxters, we be crows alone
that steal your corn
but give great blessing, listen,
listen down, dark man, you blank cartoon,
pay heed, pay heed.

THE BLIND MAN

I barely get a whiff of what you meant
or mean, tell me more or less again, angel.

CHORUS

Now you're talking!
No wonder you can't feel us,
our sacred private parts
are pure spirit, your hands
wave through us and we feel
naught but the hush of your wish,
the swim of your whim,
the little nibbles of the need that gnaws you.
O blind man we are older than you
by far, older than any,
trust us when we mock at you,
smile at the permanent tragedy of our condition,
let alone yours!

We would let
you touch us if you could.
But we are older than the dark.

30 June 2008