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But no one knows how old you are
when you're light
coming in the window –
really, who ever heard of old light?
Pasolini tried to show it in Judea,
a man walking in a mean desert as if
*the age of the light is in direct proportion
to the stones it falls on.* So there are rules
to the unlikeliest, exceptions to them, weird
liberties between elbow and armpit.
Who can say? Our habit is confusion,
from which sleep is a relief, though it bears
notoriously a bad name for bewilderments
all its own. I dreamt you again last night,
your blue coat, my naked thigh.

16 May 2007

GOD BOTANY

*There is a flower
whose name we may not say*

it grows nearby,
six or seven inches over your head,
you can reach it easily
but grasping it is hard
and no one can uproot it
no matter how hard you try.

Jaguars, flowers
that look like.
Tiger lilies. Trout
lilies. I am God
in this small
world the word.

Only Paracelsus was so bold before me,
licking the pollen from the air in May,

and later the aromaless hibiscus mauves
evening light that we call Rose
of Sharon as if another God
(a better one, son
of bitter sea, son of man)
had touched it.

A little yellow etcetera flower
high on the embankment by the Metambesen
like a child's stuffed airplane
he clutches to his frightened chest,

polygala.

Are you me?
Do you know the things I've seen,
the fireworks over Morzine
or the Yamuna shallow shimmering in heat?

How dare you say the flower that I name
Crisscross dubitosa, 'my-life-for-yours'
is not a real one, how dare I name
something that actually exists?

Words are for the other stuff,
the drug you eat in dream
that cures you when you wake,
the strange fermented cabbage on your plate,
Li T'ai Po left it when he sprang
out the door to fetch a pipe of wine
and never came back,

how dare I name a name
that is not only a name,
his Persian accent, his Tibetan brocaded rags,
chang and foolishness and beauty absolute—
there is no absolute but a naked man.

The blind man
kisses the rain
and knows its name,
such wetness
settles
a flower's fragrance
keeps it
from the common air

I say it now to be political and clear—
what happens is the only flower.

But the flower of sound
is not music, not just music

it is the proposition grammar sings
or this said thing sung,

through sound alone
the meaning knows.

*A thing is what happens to matter
and in matter
only when a word is spoken ,
a word that will later come to be thought of as its name*

(the word comes first, and from the shimmer of its meaning'd sound, matter is
summoned from nowhere, and shaken down into form)

And then at dawn to drag
pure white woolen blanket
no sleeper ever sweated in

drag it through the dew
till it's soaked through
then run through field and wood with it

outspread like a little sail
to pick the dust and yeast and pollen all
then bring home quick and squeeze out the wool
till every drop collects in a glass basin.

Let the water quiver, settle, calm
in the sun a little while – this
is the mother tincture. Well before noon
take a silver spoon's spoonful of it out
into a clean bottle. And nine spoons more
of pure well water from your own land.
It's lucky if thunder happens.
Cork the bottle and tap it firmly ten times,
not nine not eleven, on the binding
of an old leather book –not a bible—
then take a spoonful from it
into another clean flask, nine more spoons
of pure water from your well, then agitate.
Repeat. Repeat. Repeat. Repeat. Repeat.
This fine dilution of a May morning
is all you need. *Maia matuninalis* 6x
is ready for you now. Take
three drops of it beneath the tongue.
You have used the day itself to cure the day.

*Now dance around
the May Pole all
thou likest,
no bone
will bother thee,
no sinew strain,
no allergy allege
its specious info
versus thee.*

At last when I had begun to doubt if not despair,
on May sixteenth the rose of Sharon put forth little leaves.

It is Time that heals us
but we must take time,
take it, borrow it from space
as I have shown,
dilute it and succuss it,
beating time, beating the time
to make this hour Ours.

To take time in.

We don't lecture here about flowers,
we listen.

Then we speak songs that help flowers grow,
I don't know

how it works but work it does,
and helps us human sisters human brothers know

what it means for us to have a flower
that there are flowers in the world

these living crystals whose axes run through time not space.

16 May 2007

(Spagyric maxims:)

1.
*A flower is
what it makes you think*

*that is the real alchemic work, the **Opus floris***

2.

*A rose doesn't look
systematic at first glance*

or a hydrangea or a stand of hollyhocks---

*you have to study it
to read the design.*

3.

*So that is how it is with poems: a floret, a book of poems, a flower. Not a bouquet,
not an 'arrangement.' A book is self a flower.*

16-17 May 2007

= = = = =

Hello sun
it said
for me to say

is how it felt
to say to see it,
big light
come out
of my mouth.

He had so many names
I will call him Golden Girl
a yard over the horizon
warming the chill
planetary bones.

We got the gender of the luminary right (*die Sonne*)
then lost it to the Romans (*il Sole*)—
we were both right
depending on our country, for:

it is the earth
that makes the stars
twinkle as they do

and it is the earth
that milks from mother Sun
our light our heat

this earth the eye
of Buddha
they call it,

this earth an eye
summons
by long seeing.

17 May 2007

= = = = =

Catch up with love before the horoscope
breaks and lets those little mice run out
that rule the stars, what did you think,
it's a machine like everything else, the water
is a machine, your maiden meditations
are worked by the moon for his own
inscrutable purposes. And porpoises too
who slither thoughtful through the waves
are busy fretting just like you and me
alarmed by elaborate anxieties the System
uses somehow to keep things running,
maybe our wretchedness and grief are
the universe scratching its shaggy back
like a hog on a hickory fence, friction,
friction, sacred upset, holy unhappiness
and love in the middle like cold cream
to soothe the smart. And get the greasepaint
off, the face you wear to say je t'aime.

17 May 2007

(Spagyrica : 17 May 2007)

*A flower is
what it makes you think*

*that is the real alchemic work, the **Opus floris***

*A rose doesn't look
systematic at first glance*

or a hydrangea or a stand of hollyhocks---

*you have to study it
to read the design.*

That is how it is with poems, a floret, a book of poems, a flower. Not a bouquet, not an 'arrangement.' A book is self a flower.

17 May 2007

POETRY ALSO A LABORATORY SCIENCE

It is the poet's business to make assertions.

--These assertions may arise from thought, experience, or from operations of whatever kind with language.

It is the reader's business to test these assertions.

-- Note that the poet is a reader of the poem too, the First Reader (which might be a better, humbler, title than poet), so is also bound to examine and test the assertions the poem embodies.

Where is the test performed? In the laboratory of the heart.

And where is that facility? In sleep and waking, in every day and nowhere, in lust and loathing, in the sea and in between anything and anything else.

What instrument is used in testing? The heart's own tool, the breath.

-- A poem begins to be tested by and in the breath of the one who reads it.

-- A poem is what happens to the breath.

The poem is not complete until its assertions have been tested and come to rest in the Experienced Calm Surface we call the mind, and thus become part of what they had briefly disturbed.

It is the reader who completes the arc of information. The reader (say the Second Reader) completes the work of the First Reader. Together they comprise the poet.

The poem is not written until it is finally read.

Reading through Rumi

It would be a pleasure to be or have a friend,
so I could spend this long night (stars
keep coming by, from where, they never say)
talking together about everything we need to know,
for you to be you and me to be that kind of me
who keeps on trying to understand,
from nightfall to dawn one long philosophy
spent enjoying – is the tumult of your absence
more profound than the bewilderment of your presence?

18 May 2007
New Lebanon

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What of course we want
is of course. We want
what is every everyday
plus everyday's secret
shadow, Never,
disguised as a minor holiday.

19 May 2007
New Lebanon

= = = = =

The basements of museums
are like wells. The ancestors
live there. Amsterdam, the damp
around the edges of dry paper.
And on the wall the light
of Pieter Saenredam explains
why we built churches, why
there is anything to explain.
I come up the broad staircase
feeling I have just been kissed
by the dry soft lips of my grandmother,
an English woman I never knew.

19 May 2007
New Lebanon
(22 V 07)

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The opportunity. Opportunity
is a bell from which
the iron clapper has been stolen.
By whom? Doesn't matter.
Give it back. Just you, you
have to bring your own,
a tongue to tell, a spoon
to scoop sound out of the bell.
And this strange sound sustain thee.

19 May 2007
New Lebanon

= = = = =

Joseph Beuys, in remembering

It is a great thing
for a man
to put a hat on a tree.

And what if a tree
makes a man
put out green leaves?

Are we quit
or is this Palestine
all over,

the loaves
turned into fishes
and vice versa,

the miracle is
that nothing is
itself and not another.

19 May 2007
New Lebanon

BULLETIN ABOUT JESUS

The dying and reborn gods of the Mediterranean fertility cults were gods of barley gods of wheat. Gods of grain. Jesus who died and was born again is none of those. He is not concerned with grain, his body is bread, the work of human hands, his blood is wine, the milk of human cunning. He is a god of the city, where humans live in crowds and circumstance, he is a man of crowds, and on the rare times he stood apart alone the devil attended him or Roman soldiers came. He is the urban messiah, all sword and clarity, miracles of healing and technology – natural enough for his cult to spread to Rome and Alexandria, leaving countryside to its heaths and heathen peace.

19 May 2007
New Lebanon

HERMETIC PROPOSITIONS

The invention of agriculture is the invention of war.

Our death is an altar offered. Who comes down on it to bless?

Wheat is the ghost of the sun. Barley the ghost of the moon.

We who eat are eating ghosts. We live on our own deaths to come, measured out day by day.

A tree is how water stands up.

Water is how wood escapes from itself and yet does not fear fire.

There is nothing left in us to wash away.

Water rushes through the reeds.

The reeds I am quiver in their emptiness.

Emptiness I try to make mine.

Vain quest! Music!

We walk and talk, yet sometimes I think we are just mummies of the Gods.

The spine has floors and gaps between them, stairs and broken treads.

The spine is a tower open to what sky?

Osiris is green, but we thought him black.

A flower is to breathe.

19 May 2007
New Lebanon

= = = = =

Leise, leise said the leaf
this is no uproar,
there is a smile
hidden in light
my shivering movement
lets you see.

*

No need for more.
Don't knead the door.
It would open by itself
if it had a self,

you would go through easy
if you were you.

As it is, it is.
And you prowl around outside
anxious to come in.

But as it is, in
is where you live
already always, in
is where you're coming from.

20 May 2007