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= = = = =

Without compulsion
the delicate remark

a kind surgery
to the face I face you with

using such pronouns
just to set the table for

the unknown guests even now
hurrying through the rain

to eat our food. A miracle
that we live.

1 October 2006

BREATH OF BREAKING

1.

The president of the sea
sails out towards Miracle.
a small island in the vast
archipelago of ordinary.

Prayer wheels spin on deck
—how would we get there at all
without the hidden gods, gods
hidden in us, not just in ocean?

For I am Cthulhu too, and Poteidan
lord of fairyland and folderol.
These, who help me, help me
to be more than me, and less.

2.

The rubber grip or ferule on the fountain pens made for the youngest student
helps teach ink before the muscles of the wrist forget the alphabet, their share.
Heat on, it's cold in here.

3.

Back to the ship. The miracles
wait for the sad old hulk to heave
its breast against the old marble pier—
for this land is ancient – in fact

it came down to earth before the continents
drifted in from old Gondwanaland
and some of its wildlife comes from Sagittarius
where the whole shebang is heading anyhow—

the four-winged parakeet with steel-blue wings
the lizard with a thousand golden scales exactly
at death each scale becomes a coin
and for days the islanders are drunk with spending.

And the fish that sleeps on land safe every night

to taste the quiet dark – what a noisy house
the ocean has – these animals remind us
gently of our origins east of the sun.

We always knew it. Our veins are blue
for instance though our blood seems red.
Everything tells us we are strangers here,
everything explains. But would you listen?

4.
Not you. It was girls all the time. Or boys.
Or hunting lodges, suicides, ski jumps,
symphonies, prizes, suntans, foie gras,
didn't you ever stop to wonder what

all these colors are *for*? Now you skeptics
have to board the skipper's everlasting
skiff and be gone to Miracle, the island
with two moons and no mouth.

1 October 2006

THERE ARE NO MAPS HERE

1.

Not to wonder
how many wanderers
need the other side
of broken leaves.

2.

Tea hills West Bengal
those I knew a little
rubble of the Roman steps
in Glanum one more

city lost into some other
a wall you can lean on
a stone holds your weight
as well as any senator.

3.

Quick, be angry,
time snatches this mirror,
the man with you is dead
the woman never speaks to you again.

4.

It is always a vineyard of course
Rhine or Millbrook Napa
Champagne. The train
runs through an old war.

The names still hurt me.
Again and again
my uncles died
in the clouds of gas

until I had seen

so many deaths
I felt like the moon
but mistressless

5.
and a little radio nearby
stock exchange chattering numbers
Dax and Cac and Footsie
squeaked like dormice in roof thatch

nothing means much
when you're on a train
the names come at me
some ancient magician

had stolen access
to the middle of my head
and bellows out the secrets there
as if I too were part of the world.

2 October 2006

= = = = =

Remember to pretend.
The sun's gone in now,
the root is waiting – plenty
of water down there, water
is the light below the ground

the light you can drink
we called it in Atlantis
when we were still getting used
to this rich planet
after the austerity of soul
from which we hurried to descend.

2 October 2006

= = = = =

And things were left to be me—
royal protea, hibiscus everywhere,
even here in autumn Rose of Sharon
and on Ann's lawn some amanita

as if her comely shrubbery hid a shamaness
disguised in Spring Street clothes, dream on,
traveler, a house however pale is not the moon,
we are not what grows around our dooryard,

the savage world we try to tame by word.

2 October 2006

= = = = =

Write this down too:

spin a flower

trail fingers in the river

from the slim flank of the canoe

then you too can be my mother

a strange sodality you joined

one night and forgot to resign from

the flowers they send you every year

and sometimes leave a pink

bill hung on your doorknob,

your door, are you finally

beginning to understand?

3 October 2006

PARTHENOGENESIS

(on a prompt from Lucas V-F)

Part of me knows Genesis
and part of me resists
any decent flow of tribal history.

Either I had no mother
 (but I did, I had a loving mother,
 all her life)
or I was never born.

Another thing is to be born a virgin.

2.

The part of me that knows Genesis
doesn't like the God who howls over the garden,
monsoon wind, shaking
apples off our only tree.
O apple be a mother to me.

3.

This is how a man is born:
a woman picks an apple up
and cuts it open, every woman
has an ivory-handled knife.

She looks down at the two halves
and says a word that only women know,
every woman has an ivory-handled word

and when it's spoken the apple
grows up tall and thick and pale
into the semblance of a man:
whose eyes are closed,
he's asleep on his feet.

And then she touches his lips
with her ivory fingertips
and opens up his eyes.

And this is how it really is
but where in your Genesis do you find this?

4 October 2006

= = = = =

Faces look up at me
from the grain of wood.

Their eyes come sharp
as mine unfocus.

People talking on the train
are like faces in the wood grain

eyes I know, voices
I do not recognize.

*

A family of strangers
I live a whole life in

trying to remember
the feel of my own skin

or what it means, the 'own'
of anything, to have or be,

or have it have you also
when you thought you were free.

4 October 2006

= = = = =

And there could also be
a kind of trying
that no one does.

It does itself all round us
we feel the effort of it
that slips past us

we call it wind or call it time
or hear falling through the leaves
the clatter of light.

5 October 2006
(end of Notebook 291]

CAST AT NIGHT

after a night of everyone
sin no more it said

And I am a sign, I too
have a saint, Thérèse of Normandy
who told God to send her the miseries
so no one else would suffer

absorbent suffering, like adhesive love

*

How few hours there are.

So little time left
to be other people

brave as logs breaking
free in a jammed river
waiting for *current* alone
to do our loving for us

our crystal relationships
shatter at the lightest touch.

*

Cat, cat's whisker my father
twirled, it worked, it *tuned*
the crystal, you tuned in
to the radio, WEA, crystal set,
you used earphones to turn
the groan of crystal
into John MacCormack singing
My Snowy Breasted Pearl.

*

Ordinary sound

says anything.

Stateside lingo, a path up your arm
down which the blood deigns to run
and from the all-night diner observation post
more than one war is planned and supervised.

5 October 2006
Providence

= = = = =

1.

If the imaginary tasted the rose
the bee a way does or
if the inflammatory document once read
dissolved in peaceful flames
and no more kill you kill me—

does a bee do it
or does a way
bring our weak feet
along with it,

or us, old us,
does the way way us?

2.

worth worrying about
over the Seekonk rush hour eighty
percent of the cars heading east on I-195
fleeing towards New Bedford and Boston and China

only a few speeding into the purely imaginary west.

6 October 2006
Providence

LES AMANTES

pass my window
street. They walk

like elm leaves scuttling in the wind
blondes a little withered

retaining beauty, as a property
of being, hurrying hair

in mild north wind
swinging their hips in unison

with this my canzone.

7 October 2006
Thayer Street

THEORY OF GENRES

(not said to the panel on Innovation or Genre or something, Friday 6 X 06)

All I know of genre:
One word follows another
and I hurry along
trying to follow them.

Eventually, out of breath,
I lay my pencil down and say
What place is this
to whom I've come?

6 October 2006
Providence

= = = = =

Close to the beech tree
alertness wavers

such smooth bark
so many leaves
dark red high summer
one side but the other

Remember the bark
the shade we stood in

didn't mean at all
unless we were there

are here.

6 October 2006
Providence

= = = = =

The sun has a Roman nose
eagle-beaked, biggest
part of his face and he is all face.

In the sky a huge face,
no body but us.

6 X 06, Providence

= = = = =

I know all the answers.
They are all No.

7 X 06, Providence

THE SKY IS DOWN

The Thor bell rings
the oak answers

Who am I
who walk down your shadow

the path it makes and leaves
along the listening grass?

7 October 2006
Providence