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Cars of telling
moon of release
who asked a little
and got less

phones of feeling
five easy minutes
and no one sleeps
so earnest

the pilgrims
who've lost their map
no Santiago no
Plimoth rock

cars of telling
take you
nowhere in noon light
be happy

enough to stay
restless to be
the other place you
the blessings of.

5 December 2006

ASHERA

Quick turn around the wood
post holds the hill up

*whatever we really are
hangs from the sky*

jabber of dancers' feet
why isn't anybody talking
they all are but their speech
is ceiling and door their
language is courtyard and well

and a dog, language is a dog
isn't it, you're drunk,
we are language's dog,
that's how it goes,
we belong to Phoenician,
this conversation in the market place
this Lacan in sportsjacket holding forth in the lecture hall—
this is just us wagging our tail
to make language love us,

drink it, goed along with as
mulch of it as you ban care.

Oh. The hill is a fall of heaven.
Her stick
stuck up.
Holds us together
word by word.

Inside the ruined dance hall
twitching ballerinas movelessly twirl
lost in this master that's found them at last.

5 December 2006

NEXUS

To be cut off from the world
that feeds me
and that I feed,
 the food
my love transactions
and these words the only food.

*

Bulletin: the poet is a fetus hearing distant rumors of a world all round him, rumors that feed directly into his blood and make him feel and make him think. From which he grows and moves.

Bulletin: The world is a fetus inside the poet. It grows inside him and disturbs the once gracile form of how he moves and rests. Swollen with world, he agonizes to express it, never himself, just express the world. Express means 'squeeze out.' Childbirth all day long. His hour has come upon him.

*

To be inside the world inside you.
Loving = leaving, loss = lore.

Everything spoken is a lost cause.

And on the winning side: a walk in moonlight.

6 December 2006

Schumann, *Dichtungen für das Pianoforte*, Op.17: 1. *Ruinen*.

This thing I thought my triumph was my ruin.
The shadow of me broken over fields of rubble
sandstone and marble

the sun
always behind me,
hands of a huge clock
reach towards me from the sky,
slim arms,
she sits on a rock
in the middle distance
pondering her skills, the crafts
whose techniques are all about us,
every rock a proposition,
logic of place.

Sans stone. The matter of absence.

And once I thought I was the princeling here,
entitled to smooth contours and all the counting numbers
all the way up and out

as far as my arms could reach
for I had arms in those days too,
the dawn waltz knew me
and the noonday strife

wrestled with shadows
like all young ones,

tuned in the stars
debated emptiness and now
she lifts her face to me and all of that is done,
the pause that understands me best,
these are my tombstones all around me
you hear the hailstones strike against and sing,

all these names are mine if I want them,
works and agribusiness, Greek slaves,
tumult of Tiberius,

these stones
know sex best

and what is she
who looks at me
veiled only in this intolerable sunlight

makes me see her as she is,

vicious burden of the actual,
all my life I've loved the evidence

now here I am, trapped in my own identity,
Each stone is yours she says,
I know that, I have said it myself
over and over, each stone is you
it lifts you to a private heaven,
I was your bliss
your golden statuette
tiptoe on the wrecked cathedral,
I was your god
and you were faithful—
which is the last temptation of the devil
and here we are together
alone with what you always meant.

And it is a kind of music,
darling, isn't it? Like a shadow or like rain.
Like something you still need to name.

6 December 2006

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What do we ever know except what we're told?
Experience? Experience is just things
telling us. Things tell us their own stories.
We believe them too,
we believe everything we're told. I believe you,
the elderberry bushes near Narrowsburgh
the old woman with her wine.

6 December 2006

[On a prompt, from an unknown woman]

I left [mumble, mumble] my...
(maybe it's a book) [thinks:] I walked
down the hall, came back to get it

A tisket a tasket
they sang when I was young
I had a little basket
and all the rhymes were new then

and now I've lost it
she wanders up and down the hall
looking for what she only
now knows she's lost,

she's lost and wanders
comes through the door and sees
and says and takes a little
bundle tied with string

nobody uses string anymore
what could it really be
strap or bungee or chain
let down from the moon

to hold our words together
golden chain, my tongue
to your ear, listen,
a word she left for us to hear.

6 December 2006

A CEREMONY

What you take away
is what is left to us.

Sing it as snow, sheep
stumble to your feet
having learned at last
from their watchdogs how
to fawn on manhood.

You came from nowhere
and are here, the ox
remembers nothing
but his eyes are full of you.

The larger humans
are cliffs to your small
sea. You squall
intermittently deep
in the celebrated straw.

It tickles. Prickles.
How healed we might yet be
by one stalk of it
now found.

But the wind
hid it in its argosies,
never-ending enterprise
from there to somewhere else

but you are here.
You grew up and died
and left us a strange beginning
over and over, the crow
strutting on cold grass knows
how as well as we, or better
since he can go on up
and see us down here
kneeling eternally
around the empty straw.

And each can think

what each disposes.
The child is gone
into the man we are.

7 December 2006

(Hearing Britten's *A Ceremony of Carols* performed by the Bard Chorus conducted by Sharon Björndal)

SCHUMANN'S *TRIUMPHBOGEN*
(from the *Dichtungen für das Pianoforte*)

But the tune is the same
it curves in midair
comes back for me

takes me by the hand
but it has no hands

its eyes are glass
its feet are brass
we roll along, its heart
is my heart in fact

we'll get there if ever
only together, Burma Road,
gory dagger, blue star
on the fuselage, *who am I*
each tune demands,

doesn't anybody understand,
every tune is a person
leaning on me, leading me on,
shoving its face in my face
and I don't have a face anymore

just this architecture of identity
pale as winter sunlight

welcome, whoever,
the stones that build you
are made of air, the air
is quick, filters through brick,
sounds speaks its way through walls
forgive forgive me

I run away from you
from all of you, I am close
at last to my native silence,
that beautiful bare neighborhood of hedges
and houses I never went inside
and in these churches lived

only small flames in little blood-red jars.

7 December 2006

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if I could be as quick
as your fingertips
I could have long ago been gone.

7 XII 06

= = = = =

there is somewhere
in the world
a book you actually have to read.

7 XII 06

SCHUMANN, *STERNENKRANZ*
(from *Dichtungen für das Pianoforte*)

A wreath of stars
taken one by one

around your neck
one or two rest

further down
between your breasts

and that is all night is
a sequence of erasures

and when everything is gone
the lights come on

they tell us
are far suns

but who am I
to believe what I am told

*

I stand shivering like a man
staring up at the names in the sky

spoken one by one
louder or softer

some of the names seem
to be part of other names

names have so few boundaries
I am not the only one who calls himself I

and Robert said all this and Robert listened
but they were not the same name, just the same man

spread out over the centuries
the way names are spread out over the sky

one by one spoken
so many thousands

of years to read even
one of them rightly never

constellations: pictures
no one ever saw

we spent our childhood trying to see
the lion the bear the lady on her chair.

*

And when you know the name of something
you're halfway there.

You are a woman then you think
compact and capable

the way women are
always remembering

something that sounds like Beethoven
or feels like Christmas

morning, all the orphans
gathered round the burning tree,

listen to me you try to tell them,
what you do not have

 you'll never have again,
and what you have now
 will last forever

you want love

 but all you'll get is love
you want warmth and care and tenderness
but all you'll get is tenderness and warmth and care,
there is nothing in the world
but what you see inside you,
look! look up at the stars!

The children did but it was day.

They saw only one star, a big one,
one they had to share,
and even that one they knew by some other name.

8 December 2006

GOBLINS,

always goblins
digging roots around my tree.
I think they're me.

I am the dark, I am the cellar
and the rickety wooden stairs
go down me to the stagnant
lake that stretches out beneath
every human house and see
the stalwart gondoliers who scare us
skimming their preposterous romances
by which we are transported
hero-like from life to life
drowning in sensation,
gasping ashore at last but where?

Another cellar another house
to climb up into and be
father or mother in, and always
the dark children with their vile wisdom
play rough around our feet,
I struggle in vain to kick myself free.

9 December 2006

(hearing Schumann's *Kreislarian*, No.3)

= = = = =

Every body
plays music
different the same

incense
smoky sunlight
Ayurvedic clear

the wind, air,
the material breath
inside a girl.

A green bird,
many birds.
Sparrows don't count.

9 December 2006

SCENIC RAILWAY

My father's hat
listens to Mozart

his name for a blessing.

Same dance he did
as you held his hand
moseying around Coney Island
under the el station, under the Mile Through the Clouds
erector-set complexity of struts and scaffold
lifting a railway over the local mind

jouncing along the track not even scared
at this easy one, the sea suddenly closer than you knew
stretching out from this place you though was strong
only now you knew the land was an apron only
narrow and slight, how could you ever trust that

knowing that, you held onto his hand less
enduring your ignorance enduring your desire
lips sealed against disclosure,
let him lead you to the dance, he leaping
you hopping, shy, hoping, not yet understanding the dance.

You would.

It would all come.

You would spend years
trying to forgive
his quiet cavalier affection
you still don't understand
how to love somebody and say nothing
nothing ever about it
as if language were never invented at all

Yet he gave you a blank book
to fill
and every day for fifty years you filled it

over and over
talking yourself into and out of love

talking the sea into place
from the top of the rickety long-ago sky.

10 December 2006