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1. K.37

Scratches on ice

ice. History
is something to eat.
At least it clears the mind
what mind?

every child
is a single question
it is the teacher's
business to ask

Three judges sit in a row
reading what they hear

pricking their papers with ballpoint pen.

Faster the wind
the examiners
search through the town for us
streets are for hiding

lock the house of prayer
crows nearby
on the pear tree by the window

open summer prayer.

II.

The eye goes out
from the sleepy wordiness of prayer
to sit with the crow a while
caress the alert iridescent gloss
a commentary
of what your lips are saying.

Midrash.

Every word I ever wrote
is for you
to comment on

so many and so many
and a man brings

so sky and so wing and so word
a brick wall holds
suspended or enclosed

a house is always in a hurry
only the street
knows how to sleep

then the quiet comes,
the domes of ever.

You think because you wear blue socks
or scarlet underwear you
add a worthwhile footnote to
all the stuff that's going on

a tree with a headache
a bird with strange powers

with a little piece of wire bent.

III.

But come now o soft sweet then
you wait for all my maybes

to tumble out of Moses's bed
and seek my own Miriam

time waits for everybody
cruel illusion that it runs

nothing changes
it stands and we drown in it

stagnant time.

A swamp or standing pool
such as at life-end an oarsman
in his iffy gondola skims

so I have turned my back on time
and done when young what men do old

and let all of your hurry your hocks
to kiss my whiskerlessly cunning lips

I mean it can never stop paying attention.

10 December 2006

2. K.39

Silence also is allowed.
Silence is a solemn ceremony.

One time I found the man asleep
his mind studying the score or the screen
his sunburned neck
the tower beside the sea

always so chipper slow he said
not know if he meant he or me

so there's room to dance around,
I hear my hand around her waist
I hear her to me,
it is the old fashioned thing the two
half afraid to smile the two
saying close things to each other
in Bickford's at dawn, New Bedford,
a cheek on someone's shoulder
is the eleventh commandment
and all the other ten dissolve in wine

he said, so what is two
it takes so many to say?

so many marks on paper
to say what you already know.

II.

Maybe too many
mistakes the priests
are coming their frivolous
white dresses over
their fusty green black
what do they want with me?

They also peddle
a kind of beauty

but not my kind and seldom kind

I laugh at their political faces
their sad-ass earnestness
their will to rule

for whenever you hear somebody say Power
you know he wants it for himself,
All Power to the People means All power to me.

Entheogenic – making god appear within, giving
 birth to some god inside –
capital and labor both deride the mind

and money's mean to rescue you from what you really mean,
tha-mal gyi shes-pa, 'ordinary mind,'
the mind before you were you

always here and always close, so terribly close
lyric, tender, clear and every government and priest
aims to drown out that new

o but I hear it now, I hear it, the real mind.

III.

Too many people listening
to get anything said

anything right. Who
hears. Gets hurt.

O music freighted with such joy
as envenoms social forms,
o quick run on the right hand
detoxifies the heart.
Wait. I've gotten beyond myself

or there is no self to get beyond.
There it is again, quickness saves,
the sperm is speed, accelerate
the happen, happiness,
a quick march for the King of Redonda
who said in his long slow books
the best of all things is speed,
speed in the star the lights the eugenic night.

11 December 2006

3. K.40

O they're ready for me
I want to be pretty in their sight

mew mew

eye eye
look at who

I'm me,
eye eye from

me at thee

at them the pretty
ones in smelly

taffeta how long
we've worn

these costumes
just to be born!

Eel pine on the long tables
marzipan and croque monsieur
pissaladière from Cavaillon
where sweetest melons grow

o I have traveled all this world
to find myself in you

with you I mean your snuffy waistcoats
your powdery satin
can this be love, this mysterious
glance chains you to me?

And I feel nothing but being being
pure rippling being
spilling out of the shadows you try

to wake up with so few candles

where something you fear
and I can't guess
is waiting you think

for you to undress and crawl into bed
while I keep talking.

II.

It still means thinking.
That's the word.
My schoolmaster squabble:
is it thinking, is it singing?

I can't help any
body decide
I'm only for the ride
along in weird
word car
I know another
way of talking
the fingers tell

wake

beside me many morning
and I'll disclose
the shimmering smile of far-off cities
but won't be sad—
sorrow's taste
and will not swallow
I will swim in that dark river
but seldom drown
down into this bright life—

that is my secret,
tears dry sooner than the night—
my song says that I'm not sure what it means.

III.

Hurry there with me,
church is over

the people all flood out
Jews and Gypsies in the marketplace
keep stalls open for the Christians—
be grateful for black plums for crisp rolls
their iffy chicken salad, chocolates
smuggled over national frontiers.
These people love us with things!
While we were loving god with second-hand words.

12 December 2006

4. K.41

Where have I been
the rain so here

sheet of glass
I break it with

eye fingers
break by seeing

through: then the tallest woman comes
to answer me and she
also has a weather she brings
from all the cat-infested prairies
where such leaves fall

look – the egg has fallen from the tree
look – the shell was blue
look – the rain is on my hand
 and spots my pale blue shirt dark where it falls
look – water that dissolves all things
 gives stone its true color
look – we are fish down there
look – we still have to learn to carry our genitals outside
look – we bear each other inside one another—

is that worth singing home about?

II.

I see your signal on the hillside
you're waving at me I am guided

Where does going go?
A melody, then an amber person comes
and varies it a little
then we're almost done.

The rest is leaves
seafoam I mean
restless in the wind

chittering out the changes
and all the while you wave to me
I come across the lawn
eager as used to

but there is no am
no lawn only woods no wood only hill
and the hill is far away by foot

I think it's you
it may be crow
or break a branch

I have spent so many years
traveling towards a broken tree

that speaks to me

not just at night, I wake
to see it at the edge or end
of seeing, a small dark gesture
happy or sad has to obey

beyond cheap commerce of affect signifiers.

III.

Hurry sometimes is the only answer.
"Fear turns into desire" says Dante
speaking of the battalion of the newly dead
idling upon Acheron. Hurry over.
Hurry through your dread, your tired
endlessly repeated deed,
you can get through anything
Paschendaele or Plain of Jars
hurry with the chains around your ankles
Siberian cathedrals beech groves of Mecklenburg maybe
a wild bull charging through the trees

he knows how to get there but stops and looks around
looks at you you look at him
the birds are singing and finally everything doesn't listen.

13 December 2006

5. K.175

An army of it.
Army does it.
Day soldiers
filter through
pictures of trees
pines to me
and only me

my shadow my fortress
up the ravelin
it all is war.
Polemos that extremity
is the gods' amusement
when love gets out of hand
a steel band round the brows
filleting bluefish on the pier
an army is a navy through
a ship is just another knife

antlers. Horns
of the trees. Italies
full of them, tall
hurrying to sea.

But this is the strangest war
without bleeding
it's trying to teach something,
war is explanation

greed bleed
where's money
what does green
mean to a tree

give me more mother
the soldier cries, give me
the little box every shadow carries
snug in the heart of its absence—

is murder the only way to come home?

Busy trees today
making tomorrow
scattered corporals
chivvying recruits

excuse me, be bleeding
now after all it all
sorefooted limping from
mysterious battle—
that's just a guess reading
peculiar evidence in dead leaves.

II.
A fountain.
Grace.
Shadow
bends to drink.

My shadow.
What can we do
with those who
do not want to learn?

What can we do with those who do not want to want?

Today hunters
stalking trees
baroque embellishments
of camouflage

outbursts of gun
at outbursts of geese
the sky's plain fact
will never wake us up

my shadow's thirsty
it is dry work being
dry sleeping so long
dry trying to remember

in sleep all the songs,

graceful shadow bend
low to remember
then step with me beside

sister shadow we love we have been together

scatter of place sidewalks
investigated bold a long
time before these forests
came and all you see

the fountain when you bend are shadows or reflections too

as if you drank
miracles of structure alone
mutable evidence who
you were when you first heard the song.

III.

a bird though
cries above it all
and the war changes

war wax
general rubble
ambulances on parade

pomegranates toppling
from a market stall
Chinese apples

we called them that
the only fruit where you
could taste the color itself

is that what I was following
through the woods around my house
color alone, animalless,

as if there were a place
to have come from

or a place to be here in

and there never is,
morning is full of suppositions
a girl putting into her lips

a chunk of doughnut
stale before yesterday even
but she know how to taste it new.

14 December 2006

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Some wives ago I had a wife
in love with Arthur Balsam
an old-style Polish virtuoso who
specialized in Haydn.
For years her photo of the small
smiling ordinary man
already old, a veteran of the piano,
stood against the wall.
She is in the picture too
smiling admiration
which clearly made the old man glad,
surprised, embarrassed, whole.

What pure love can do!
Today I put on a concerto by Mozart
and discover the cadenzas to it
(Köchelverzeichnis 238, B^b)
are by him, somebody else
is playing it, doesn't matter who,
else is all that counts, a younger
man, to keep going, let the cadence
rise and falls and rise again,
eternal variations on no theme
and no end of images smiling from the wall.

15 December 2006

6. K.238

Nothing out there relaxes
so we have to.
The squirrel is terse, the crow
ever vigilant. Idleness
is ours to explicate,

propagate. It is our job.
Or vigilante. We call it air
and all our young lives be spent
in fruits of idleness all round,
images ideas rhymes tunes tones

the apples of Sodom
stones. It's hard work to be easy,
we are building all day long
the structures of heaven,
bamboo scaffolding, girders welded

eyebeams overhead, lost sky,
painting a woman's breast to fit
inside a dome that's not there yet,
so hard to be easy, all about running,
running away and working peace,

running away from each other, dogs,
squirrels, so many variations
and no center, no medicine,
until someone makes a beautiful blue picture
persuades you to lie down and be still.

Be touched.
Have done it yet
I or another has?
Lie there, darling,
let morning lull.
This is the day
religion begins again

in a drowsy world
so hard to make sleep
so many gods used up

and the busy little road to now.

II.

O shepherd lend me one of your sheep
and one of your little Welsh dogs to guard her
shepherd lend me your flute so I can call
the valley from the hill and have them send
some maiden up to bring me lunch
a little cheese a little bread an apple
shepherd lend me your shaggy cloak
made out of last year's ram o shepherd
lend me your ears and tell me the time
how to make the flute make sense the tune
I wobble never makes them dance shepherd
good shepherd lend me your soul so I can see
down the flowering hillside and teach myself
the names of what I see your map shepherd
lend me your map and let me go with dog and
flute and sheep and stumble shepherd
lend me your staff so I don't fall down the rock
so I can have a measure of control over all
the animal potencies I have borrowed from you
shepherd lend me everything I need I will go
to the country they lead me to where everybody
knows everything and I can finally speak.

III.

Blue flutter. Pages
of no book. Rhapsode
dithering with Homer's
heroes. Hollyhocks
speak Greek:

the king

is with his admirers
listening, they're strolling
in his garden far from the sea.
They scheme insurgency,
campaigns against the paynim
d'Outremer, armadas,
manifestos, new schools of art,
juntas, Anschluss, coups
d'état.

What else have men
to talk about? Their will
has banished them
from any natural world—
they have run out of beasts to prey on,
appetites huger even than the garden,
they're hungry enough to eat a rose.

One step at a time, Majesty,
our enemies are shadows
but like shadows they are everywhere,
Majesty, around us and beneath us
and no step we can take leaves them behind.

Your caution, Admiral, does you credit—
but have you never seen a shadow
swallowed up by the weary raptures of the sea,
a wave rises up in light and falls in dark?
Sail into the unbounded and bombard it
then sail back to me and tell me
where your shells fell and what strange
cities they laid waste unseen.

16 December 2006