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=====
And then began
a party over Russias,
a tremble in the golfer's wrist
called a yip or yips,
the spoon shakes tea leaves on the stove top,
just a few (this didn't happen
but it could),
the neurological empire
under siege again,
not madness this time but inadvertency
(this didn't happen,
he didn't know why he was saying this,
or doesn't know, and said it
anyhow, neurology is just anyhow,
neurology (sidemen
broken-down bass, overweight drums,
lumbago trombone) neurology
is what happens,
what the bumper stickers call shit
and you find it in your calendar
between the next war and the tidal wave
as if the earth had feelings too.

1 January 2005

=====

Casting spells on pretty girls
was science enough for the Renaissance.

What we need now is the next invention
so pretty girls can cast them back.

1 January 2005

=====

And I have something to say to you,
ace in my hand and a heart on the table.

But I won't say a word of it.
The sun is rising now—

we can't look right at the source of light,
it hides whatever's closest to it.

We need some dark to help us see—
and that's where you come in,

the shadow I wear around my will.

1 January 2005

=====

These narcissuses now,

this time, all green uplift and few flowers
and those few small, not even very white.

And that glorious distressing animal smell
is missing, the scent
that's supposed to scare you every morning
when you set foot in the dining room
and look around to see what beast is this.

No flowers, no smell. The green
has nothing to report,
slender harp strings in the house of the deaf.

1 January 2005

R

Right. Right road. The wheel
sometimes pauses,
the spoke
of someone else's feelings
cracks, the wood of movement
ratchets. Slows.
The reed breaks
in my fingers
so I know I'm where I ought,

ought. I am a road. Right, rite, ritual,
road. Read. Read the text,
riddle the forest
with faraway blue meanings.

Riddle. What did the god say
when he spoke into his hat?
What did the goddess think
when she said nothing so loudly
over the whole world and it snowed
and snowed until only creatures
with lamps and antlers could make their way

and you call this a road?
Riddle the forest,
everything alive has a question for you,
listen,

bend the wrist as if you sheltered
a delicate bird somehow
made its way into your hand

and needed to take a breath,
a breather, before it flies again

to whatever landing it has in mind,
R is a breath, a flutter
of wings at the back of the mouth,

where a taste rises sometimes
the Greeks called truth,
αληθεια, the unforgotten,

return of the repressed.

The thing that comes back and dreams you
is the only truth you have.

R

It takes so many rrrrrrs to tell you this,
wolf growl,
Santa Claus hiding in the chimney,
people live there,
I heard squirrels waltzing on my roof,
but you were sleeping.

What do you call the city where you sleep?
Is it Faraway, is it Forgiveness,
Hudson or Habit, Unlikelihood,
Wrongitude or Rightitude,

is the city the same as the road?

(I growl in my sleep
girls tell me.

R is ∞ L is /their
fascinating waltz
activates precious words,
pearl, girl, grail, lure, Lar, real,

but don't just go by sound,
it is the sign
that is queenly,

it is the sign that proposes
all we understand,

read the sign
the riddle carved into the skin of things,

let the sound respond to the sign as it will
through accidents of history and language
that unknown system
of influences

but the sign carries the air
free even of the tree
Woden carved it in
in our first days
together, when we lived in the world.

R

When you look at this sign you see
a man leaning on a woman.

Truth in reading. Remember.
A woman remembering a tree.

1 January 2005

TRUTH

You can't tell the truth
without laughing,

the truth is always frivolous like champagne,
truth always goes to your head.

Truth is the phantom pain
left from an amputated world.

Truth is a potluck neurology,
a picture frame that catches you and holds.

Truth is the tarnish on your silver chalice
twenty years after your last cigarette.

It must be close to the moon it changes so.
Truth needs a good spanking –

then it will really have something to remember.

1 January 2005

=====

When I've finished all my work
then it will be time to begin.

1.I.05

THEY CALL IT PLAYING

Fervent daughters' chins
firmly hold their violins

leaving their fingers free to dance
or agitate or just insist,

they always look so surprised
by the music, their bodies

swaying in an unexpected wind,
their eyes closed in denial

or trying to visualize inside
escape routes to silence

where all this began. And now
is when they are most themselves

for music is the avenue to silence
the royal road down through the shades

leading to the *right silence*, only that,
that all this noisy struggle has to earn.

1 January 2005

LETTER TO BRAHMS

Notes leave room for silence.
The way words leave room
between themselves for other words.
The text fills in from the side
where daemons of various religions
rush in to abrogate the silence.

Too much silence and men would guess the truth.

But we have our wheel to keep turning,
spinning world or heaven's axle,
old Buick whitewall tires, we
have everything and keep it going.
Girl by girl we silence the silence.

1 January 2005

=====

I asked for the morning
they gave me white
to mix into my deep colors—

to make them go further, they said,
but I said I don't want the pale
colors that remember something else,

I want the thing itself
so blue it hurts the eyes
so red it makes you happy

uncontrollable colors
untamed by decency
only the hunger to feel everything.

1 January 2005

=====
Try this: squeeze a lemon
over Portugal.

Lick the rim of the glass
then rim it with black sand

and still try to taste
the music you recall from her lap.

Now properly confused
you open the giant Atlas

and look up in fine print at the back
all the towns that begin with L.

Now go to each one
and stand in the market wearing sneakers

and preach a new religion in each place,
one special to that weird town,

one they never heard before.
For a day or two they'll think you're the god.

Then move on, leaving
sour theologies curdling in the sun.

But those too are of use – we find
so much music in a god that's died.

1 January 2005

=====

But even then I tried to answer.

–Nobody spoke.

That makes answering even more important, the pale feathers trailing down her back, the strings that keep the pen from running away back to the wilderness of signs.

–You don't have to say so much. The simple lie will tell the truth. By implication, everything is obvious. It only gets confused when you explain.

But men are paid only for their explanations. What they *know* is worthless in a market economy, like sunshine in summer, or stars reflected down a well.

1 January 2005

=====
This, but the other side of this
is the kind of flowers
they use to build their floats
for the Rose Bowl Parade

profuse, common, single-colored
whole masses of them tilted on
to be yellow. Red.
Blue's infrequent.
And no green flowers—

they have to use broccoli or brussel sprouts.
Demand green flowers,
black flowers. Confuse Nature.
Sing opera while you gather them,
the way Persephone sang
that aria from *Orfeo*
when she squatted down to pluck
the blue forget-me-nots of oblivion.

1 January 2005

AFTER WITTGENSTEIN

Not just count
scalps with me

or furtive trysts
in amateur hotels.

I am an instrument
a flexile system

not infinite numbers
but an infinite series

of finite numbers,
Austrian alphabet

means all the ink
in my pen times

all the words in your head
plus the last thing

somebody else
altogether different said.

1 January 2005

COMMUNIQUE

The altar bread is all eaten.
We think the gods came in the night.
Or sent their angels: the wine's gone too.

We hear children's voices
at midnight in the sanctuary.
The red lamp flickers. A baby cries.

1 January 2005

=====

And in this miracle a feather
floats past my sleepy eyes,
sunshine. What bird
let it go? Who in heaven
is so profligate? It's like you,
my love, always leaving
your shadow on everything I know.

1 January 2005

=====

And waiting here for me
like a cowboy ambush
the north wind. The west sun.
The eastern emptiness.

1 January 2005

=====

I have rolled up the road
that led to you and home again,

I have subtracted your city
from the list of precious stones.

My dictionary has holes in it
where things used to be

that concerned you, holes
like cigarette burns in old silk

or the lost names that Norsemen
called the months of summer.

1 January 2005

=====
Caravel. The *Wasa*, say,
intact in the museum,
where did we see it,
Vancouver, Amsterdam?

Twice crossed the sea in a ship,
only twice. The sea tasted
like wine on the way home,
like freshly shampooed hair

on the way there. I live now
on an island halfway gone,
between the coming and the going.
No bigger than a leaf.
Delicate as clitoris.

1 January 2005

DANNEMORA

Way out of town a prison,
in the prison an old man
has been there all his life.

That is what a prison is.
Like a gender with no other.
A clock with no hands.

1 January 2005

=====

I pretended to be a king
you pretended to be a little girl
looking idly in a mountain pool.

But somewhere nearby a piano was playing,
somebody doing their Czerny études.
And somehow thirty years went by.

1 January 2005