

2-2005

febA2005

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Recommended Citation

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Suppose it is.
And then a cushion
of air or light between
you and what you need

what you think you see
there, on the other side of the air
but it's only air, only light
moving between you

and later when you
if you touch
that in-betweenness compresses
air and light so that

touch is perfect darkness
and all things rapt into unknowing
between the two of you,
to lay a hand on

is to administer the dark.

1 February 2005

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Ten minutes to say it
before running out the door.

Ridiculous –
all my life and I haven't gotten it said
how could I say it in ten minutes?

But I can: It is this:

here everything is.

The word in your hands.

The hand in your word.

1 February 2005

“If they gave names to whatever passed, what would the name be?”

—(RK, after Plato).

They would be oranges rolling off the sofa
and across the Persian rug.
The cat would be annoyed.

Who put the oranges there?
She did, Barbara.

Nobody is named Barbara anymore.
It’s the third most common female name in the US, didn’t you know that?
But that includes all the people, old the people,
old people don’t count.

Do you know any Barbaras?
I don’t know any oranges either.
I don’t have a cat.
I do have a Persian rug or I used to.
My sister took it when my mother died.
It was fourteen feet long and came from Isfahan.
I loved it, like flowers growing through the sand in sunlight.
It’s gone. Persia is now Iran.
They make speeches there now, not rugs.

Where is my mother?

1 February 2005
(Olin, classwork)

ein Stein

In the beginning there is a stone.
The stone cracks.

Every stone wants to be an egg.
Any world is begotten by that desire.

Every time a stone cracks,
light flies out,

some flies sideways
some flies straight

Time is a young girl unwrapping Space.

A tree of light,
a world is born.

Something comes out of the light.
Eventually this is us. And people like us.

And then all the *other people* we think about:
gods, numbers, devils, music, stars.

All from one stone.

<1 February 2005>

CLUNG WRIST

the dumb disorder
of my limb.

Limbs. Flightless bipeds,
tailless, inarboreal,
subject to melancholia,
musical, live long as turtles.

The Pope is sick
my wrist is swollen
one contemplates mortality
dumb as chickens,

so many years and know so little.

1 February 2005

A PENCIL

A pencil has healing at its other end.

But I am a coin
a face on one side a building on the other,
or an eagle or a number.
A blue-footed euro looking for some crime.

I am the king of a light country
and my money sounds like seashells,
my army is waves and my navy clouds.

Forgive me when I abdicate
and row away into the dark country
like a little boy in a rowboat
far out on the lake waving
proudly to his mother waving
faintly back from the diminishing shore.

1 February 2005

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It begins to hurt to write.
The fun part is dipping the pen
wondering what word
the nib will suck up from the inkwell
this time, in winter,
stars so very bright.

1 February 2005

CASTAWAYS OF A HIDDEN STAR

he says, writing with a twisted wing,
we garret qabbalists, we Lutherans
of the harp, determined to pluck
every tone from every text until
the whole dreary book is just one singing
the whole of history just a girl in the rain.

2 February 2005

GARNET

for you I love
the ruby of it
not the rarity
the privilege

not money
round your neck
but this deep stone

I stood once
on a mountain of it
I want the thing
I give you to

be more than a mountain
than a moment
brash cantankerous beauty
a Christmas tree among daisies.

2 February 2005

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every plant cures something
diseases yet to come
and plagues stored in the stars
these will withstand

ox-eye daisies cucumber vines.

2 II 05

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Who knows the answer to this question?

Seven.

Is that the answer

or the number of people who know the answer?

No.

No what?

It is neither the one nor the other.

What is it then?

It is seven.

Seven what?

No, seven is the question.

I can't help,

I am hopelessly this.

2 February 2005

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I tried to hear it
but I was listening
so I missed it.

2 II 05

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Light a match
and bring it to a candle
let the oxygen thing
do its blue work

a cup of colors
cherish the wick
inverted

like an Albert Hall
made out of light
in one small dark London

a park I hold you in
for the sake of skin.

The embassies are all nearby
white-robed parties saturate the park
and softball's played –

I demonstrate the innocence of the actual.

3 February 2005

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My hands are tied
all invention is overhearing
or peering through a knothole
more-than-Duchamp left
to contemplate the work.

Opus. Where money comes to hear music,
poor people stand among the rich
and for a moment the oboe's reed
is worth a weekend on Nantucket.

3 February 2005

ROOTS

You can tell I am angry at the dictionary
that said all this before I was born

but if you read me sideways
you'll see I'm writing old cursive Sumerian,
my roots entangled with yours
like a lecher's paws beneath the table
in this sinister café.

Nos racines. The words have roots
that implicate them with one another

then all the words take root in us
or find themselves in us
urgently growing up through our dark why.

How does this work.
Ask some Swiss, like Saussure or Piaget,
they tend to have the smoothest guesses

like that beautiful ninety foot fountain in the lake
the white leap up into the sky
and all it does is be beautiful
meaningless non-stop the gulls
astonished at its everlasting ambition
to work so hard and only turn to spray.

3 February 2005

“When did a word become a burial?”

– Cori O’Keefe

When someone wrote it on the wall.
Or when someone saw a pretty pattern
in or on the rock
and said this looks like a bird
maybe somebody meant to make a sign for bird,
maybe we should say it when we see it, ‘bird,’

but the savages over the mountain pronounce it ‘uccello’
uccellini, o little birds
fly off the wall
and hide us from yourselves
in the big sky

make the word go away,
give me back
the pretty mark
give me back the rock the wall

To speak a word
consents to burial.

3 February 2005
(Olin 101)

ANTARCTIC

“brown amidst endless white”
says Susan Rogers about Castle Rock
which “really is rock”

the bone shows through.

I am bone inside

and where are you

In what passes with as for eternal
the snows persist, their warehouse permanent,
a woman down there at McMurdo.

Twist wrist my hand won't write.

Spill on my table the russet and cambodian lilies
the lilac lilies and the few not yet opened buds and colors in the sun

and I read about the rock
that is cold

the rock beneath the skin.

4 February 2005

MEETING WILLIAM BURROUGHS

I was sitting having coffee on the terrace of my hotel

When a man came walking up the street and said to me pleasantly

I am James Grauerholz – when William Burroughs heard you were in town

He sent me to say hello. Welcome to Boulder, Colorado!

5 February 2005

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I guess when you're actually in it
Nebraska doesn't feel so far away.

5 February 2005

HORIZON

Wait for the penguins.
The procession
is leaving the ice,

they walk into the sky
wouldn't I
like to go with them

wherever
the crowd has in mind
to be gone

leave all solid things behind.

5 February 2005