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SKILLET

The necessity of measure is iron.
Abaft the cookstove the pretty volunteer
kept off the desert megrims. Too damp
for saguaros, too dry for a goddam tree.

Only joshuas and a plague of rats.
Smells good I guessed since I was glassed
in shyness. Had better, the cook says
agitating the menstruum in the iron pan
with a wooden ladle, here taste it.

I still do. The mind is like that.
We all crouch by the fire. All volunteer.

15 March 2005

[Writing from a part of the body:]

I need you. Over and over
I assert it, the right to need you

and to do, always do
something about the need. The you.

I have felt you pressed or stretched
across or on me

but it is me, being me,
the father of all my voices who

makes us bend and throb and hold
the many of you as the fulfillment of

a simple need.
You are the need itself.

15 March 2005
(class exercise)

DUTCH STILL LIFE

1.

The mail I sent, the memory
broken like a wrist

hangs there

hand, can't do anything
with you

the Sun is the woman who gets in my eyes

2.

Bone trees of late winter

I love you best

you haughty structuralists

still permit the meek light

3.

The door went through me

and I read the books

I forgot the tale I read

and the door banged in the prairie wind

the hymn tune went

clear out of my head

and the wind came in

the tablecloth lifted and fell

only the coffee mug kept it down

and I forgot the taste of everything

then I forgot the wind

4.

I wanted to be the headache
your hands took away
the breath from your nostrils
that smelled of the horizon

5.

I wanted to be a closed house
with you outside

I'd let you look in the window
like a living room in Amsterdam

let them all pass by

let them all see

the polished tabletop the bowl of fruit the orange cat.

16 March 2005

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO –

soak in my oil.
focus on my vinegar.
lick my salt.
inhale my spiritus vini.
drink my milk.
swallow my guesses.
blink my eyes.
then close them and remember.

16 March 2005

LA VIE RELIGIEUSE

Vinegar sandwich
song without coal
walk a mile to the beach
and watch the cormorants
retrieve the wedding
rings of drowned fishermen
then home again
time for your bagpipe lesson
your afternoon tea
the gospel on tv. Hurry,
the sky is full of light.

16 March 2005

=====

I want to be another animal.
One that runs along the lines of light
one that touches and penetrates even
but does not stay
no more than a hotel
in one of those famous cities
where subway stairways hide in lobbies
and there are escalators everywhere there are differences
and hawks nest over store fronts
and I don't have to dream anymore.

17 March 2005

=====

Knowing something else
helps. A seed.

Most birds need light
to skim along.

Friction
everywhere sustains.

That is something I know
all about, friction.

The messenger must
make love before he's executed.

17 March 2005

γεις

My grandfather
died my mother died
my father died
each time a bird
got in the house

quick rock
dove flustering
she-starling

the resolution of time
means every event
in human history
is the same event

we are not an endless river
we are an exploding sun

a thick thick scar,

Fomenko tells us all kings
were the same king,
the Trojan War was the Fourth Crusade,
Jesus is alive in Paraguay.

In other words
time is the first of our mistakes.

So this bird now
looking in the window
is looking for all of me.

17 March 2005

=====

A poem is a nice thing
a mausoleum for a moment
a flag for a regiment
wandering around in the dark
inside me looking for you

A poem makes me feel
I am a Persian carpet
mostly scarlet mostly indigo
stretched out in sunlight

with the long-toed naked feet of women
shuffling along, pouring out
mint tea for themselves in gold-flecked glasses
strong black coffee for me
and I let one of them, you,
slip a cardamom seed in my cup.

18 March 2005

MANIFESTO

Organize it. At least. And then
the Feather and Rubber Band
Society wearing its one black fez
opens alleyways to neural traffic

Chicago Chicago I miss your nape
mixed with salted greens a knife
pointless yet not blunt and still
the thought that counts the spirochete

remember him from days between
the Greeks and Guy Columbo and his
Royal Palladians sailed across the
airwaves Mannerist town houses

looking for a better kind of blue.
O sapphire o ardent volunteers!
I was your little soul in a camera
a tiki torch on a Maspeth lawn

keep Slavic-speaking fireflies away
–honey, it's all abuzz you – and now
from Poland's icy mountains green
a symphony by word of mouth

uncoiling the Great Pyramid stone by stem
until your uncle hollered Hegel
I have no culture I have only god.
Fry me a disaster. O leap the leap

again the shadow fall'n from the Moon
slips down the snow in sunlight, sleep
I would give wonders if I could sleep
even dream would be a decent price

Standard & Poore's index of images
that come when you're asleep
and what they do inside your mind
or wherever sleep really lives

and who they do it and what you
see then sitting here with natural eyes
scared of understanding but gazing
steady at the fuzzy morning light.

19 March 2005

AMERICAN NEUROLOGY

Laws come true when love's
a statesman isn't it or quick
translated from the Greek
into a whim of this elegant
patois of ours, West Dutch
a little frenchified, carbon
molecule you make all the
differences dear buy me one
today or two carats adequate
or one red cat the principle
is radical to Parmenides
a 'two-ity' he said translating
a Two of Horses on a Nun of Roads
gallop coarser mindset gods
spelt, gook running down my thigh
because I needed no you wanted
and the "Emperor's Astonishment"
played by the Dragoons' band
and the trolley runs yellow up
the flanks of Mount Tubercular
from which you can see the whole
flat compact city steffy up
from the Danube system, the history
of humankind is the history of water
spill me all over your receptors
gluey with the ultimate digits of π .

20 March 2005

=====

I don't know to have to do to ask her
it usually blue the same thing a pattern
constantly inconstant what you love
is change the other trees keep walking

blerwm blerwm the other poets
shuddered on their lips when tried to
talk there should be vowels for us
beyond the dozen they give us to begin

let ü be there and ö among the fossils
we unearth as we talk o smoke the light
o amplify the wind until we read
the simpering consonants it means to tell

20 March 2005

ODE TO SLEEP

Too little speaking
and the door to Christmas
opened wide to accommodate
shuffle-hordes of sleeping pilgrims
who knew in their doze-hearts
better than to wake.

For waking is common
and a river never does it
or a star and such good things,
really good, who *do*,
personless animals of slaughter and renewal
and here is milk also
for you, spendthrift sunshine
drunkenness-generous moon.

Do it in your undream,
who oiled your skin, who wreathed
arms around you, what land's
dust in this you almost wake with
gritty on your forearms and your side?

We do our loving also in the night
because of all our businesses
love is nearest to rivers
the unending personless yearning hot
silence unrushing, sleep.

21 March 2005

THE FIRST THING HE DID

The first thing he did was go outside and breathe
slow deep slow inhalings while he counted all his gods
or as many as he could remember, dawn sun
through the rose petals of his closed eyes.

How gold turns red on its way to the white place
dark inside him. None of it means what he thinks
he thinks, it's all there, curious and not at all close
yet he smells it, the melting snow of three days thaw

the softening earth below. Still hard an inch down,
smells the snow and smells the light and the ground
faint mildew of last years lawn undone now
almost shocking with alien life, things he should not see,

like a wounded animal that limp smelly grass
oozing out from underneath the snow. Closed his eyes
again and breathed, the birds more numerous,
arbitrating in the vulnerable trees. Leaf mould,

rank possums have been here, and shadowtails
afraid of men, then the other smell, faint, faint
mercaptans of the mouffette the English called the
skunk, how can they wrap tongues around that,

meeek weasely thing men are frightened of.

What were we like before we were afraid?

He thought maybe fear is just a culture thing
like going to mass on Sunday or calling all the

living things by just one name, animals,

as if all squirrels were just one squirrel

and we live with shadows. Nothing to fear.

No one there to be afraid. Only the sunlight

he was breathing in, the limitless atmosphere

thin on mountain tops but adequate, the earth

is always, and is adequate. This breathing game

he called it, that's all this is, breathing and thinking

making stuff up to change the deep allowing

rhythm of the breath, fear and quick desire,

blue exhaustion, runnings and leapings, beds

stairways and fences: all about the gasp.

I will not gasp, he said out loud, talking to that Dane
last night who said I will not dance. I wonder
if the Dane is breathing, how deep his chest is,
how many miles inside her this breath rose

I breathe in now, deep down where he and I
are just breaths mingling harmlessly I hope
a nest of rhythms weaving nothing but the air.
It does not do to think like this, he thought,

it changes the inner trajectories of breath,
I lose the world inside me. Think about the breath
not what the breath is breathing. Think about
the in the linger and the out. Nothing else.

All the trees and snows and birds ride in me now,
I am the sky for them, their simple word
written on my simple spaces, it seems to me
I make the whole forest happy with my breathing.

22 March 2005