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Y

Every tree is a question
full of questions

every branch branches to a why
of smaller branches branching
to a why of twigs

 every twig
forks into a why of its own

Add up the questions
it is April now
and the questions are so clear
skeletons of our doubt and fear
reaching skinny fingers to the sky
for answers

But if and when the answers come
they'll come from inside,
twirl emerald bravado at the twig tip
and unfurl
 until by summer all
the questions are hidden
deep in the plausible green explanations

Leaves are no answers,
go back to winter and start again

Hier gibt's kein Warum
the Auschwitz guard told Primo Levi,
here there is no why

you have come to a place beyond explaining,

and maybe every place
becomes that now,

a world where there are no answers,
only starving prisoners, skeletons with
a rag or two of meat on them, winter trees.

15 April 2005

=====

Love is somewhere near it
but not what I mean.

Let's let the thing go
and see where it travels,

blank as ever, talking
a blue streak, quick

into the desert.
In much speaking

said Benedict you'll
not run away from sin.

It waits for you
at the end of every sentence

as she waits also
at the end of her latest

outrage on the telephone,
waits for your answer.

You make her wait
without meaning to

all you can feel is the hard
phone in your hand

then the weariness
of endless blame,

forgiveness, approach,
retreat, anger,

reassurance and good night.
You say something,

almost anything,
she hates the random

the random is all
you really have,

she hates you, really,
the hatred gives her power

to keep the thing going.
Going. This thing

of you. Where is it
going? The phone

like a dead animal in your hand
that once was quick and lissome

*I'm talking to you through a dead squirrel,
a springtime rat mangled by dogs in love*

you think, but that's not the kind
of thing you can say on the phone.

16 April 2005

=====

The dry old ragged pages
loose in the book
worn soft with use

look like the ruffled
petals of the fresh ranunculus
we just brought home

and set in a pale pitcher
just beyond the book.
the thing and its comparison

gentle in the forgiving eye.

16 April 2005

BREAK OUT BROOKLYN CALLIGRAPHY

a *rail* you rode on

buttock-squeezing all
the way to me

I see you
cucumber coming
Aldebaran rehearsing

voicing blue lights underground!

Breast you, a scrim of milk
over this *tragick Scaene*,
the pumpkin falls, the tiny Princess
who runs my heart runs out

you think she is a mouse like you
and you frolic together, can you be sure
it won't be you
who creeps back into my Cordial Castle

like the old ruined fort at the Battery
and not a cloud in all that blue
and the Statue of Libido goosing the sky?

I am a magnificent mistake,
we can never be certain,
they call them the Narrows
for a reason, the dire strait
between Brooklyn and the world.

We lived on the body of *a Fish*,
the beast of Pisces forever
sailing to the New World

and never getting there!

Exclamation point!

We

(I use this antique pronoun
I found in a heap of desires
I thought at first were maple leaves
left over from next winter

because the future keeps getting
mistaken for the past,

time tangle

((note – this is the meaning
of this whole text))

but no it was *us*)

we

who live here on the snout of the Seabeast
we who pay dear to live on these streets

what do I want to say about ‘we’
that isn’t one more cunning mystery,
the Christ child unfolding in my opening palms,
I show you, you show me,

that’s who we are.

17 April 2005

A Dream, to Birgit

As I woke you gave me a piece of cloth.

My dreams had been anxious for hours, worrisome, almost frightening, a journey constantly deferred, the cab driver waiting, rain, and only ten minutes to make a two hour crossing, cab to ferry to train to plane, we would never make it.

We would never make it, but the woman I was with kept waiting, and kept *waiting me*, I had never been a word used like that before, she used me to do her waiting, she made something in me do her waiting with her. What does it mean. Angst, contrition, and sensual allure of just *being still* with and in the place there. In the room on the hill. Who was she, was she Alexandra, the girl who asked Chirac embarrassing questions? It felt good to be with her, good and wrong, the cab was waiting, we would never get there, quarter after six and the rain beginning.

And then I woke.

And as I was waking you put a scrap of cloth into my right hand. I understood it was a piece you had cut or torn from your clothes. It was fragile, lacy but heavy, thick-hemmed, ivory in color, tattered. It was what in Brooklyn we would have called a *shmatte*, a rag, but a rag with meaning. I understood you were giving this cloth to me, sharing it with me. This is the *cloth of shame* we share, you seemed to say.

But this shame is not the shame we wrote about, the shame that's not so hard to talk about. This was deeper, the shame embedded in being. The shame that makes people excited just to have skin. The shame of seeing is deeper than the shame of being seen.

17 April 2005

JUNGLE

So we can, have to,
think about it. Jungle.
What I want
to say.

 To you. You
overwhelmed by your affinities
doing strange arts.

Stran. From across the border,
over the sea, up the beach,
strand, strands of bull kelp
looped around your torse
salt in your hair and his mouth
always coming to you
from a strange place
saying radiant nonsense
from which a new Aeschylus
begins you think.

But you were born for, haunched for,
the cave.

 All the caverns
that we own
beginning with the heart, that
 “smallest
beehive but it holds all the others”

you are built of caves
and are a cave
and need a cave
to cavern in

and there carve
your messianic doodles
on the bumgut of the world
until we feel
writhe inside us
what we suppose ourselves to understand

by us. When you are, when a cave is,
everything comes in
and only the astrology comes out

that sun you save
to light the world.

Tracy put your clothes on and come inside this minute.
Yes motherrr
but Tracy likes to flaunt it in the street,
show her astrology all over town,

a street is what a cave is dreaming of

with hard boys and sharkfin Cadillacs of old
o I adore adobe
blacktop bridesmaids
jewsharps fishbone

the sea
has turned to honey
and you can't find your door

(I ate your door).

18 April 2005

TOCSIN

A big text sin. Drum.
Merganser fly up.
War. War. Doing

strange needs. Scots
chieftains and my
Lord Gowrie going

to find plover eggs
on his cliffs come
Easter morning

o things are glad
when you let them
o things are

when you let
words lead the way!
Touch her wilderness

throw those crises
out before all this
purple's gone

that once ruled
all Judea in
fatal springtime

and now's paper-pale,
phonecall from the mall
everybody talks

at once you wear
a golden ring
to answer the sky

but silver's sulky
and a cute chick
semi-venomous

with shyness armed
with the fangs
of what she hears

hears you to the end.

18 April 2005

TELEVISION

Everyone has a special
relationship with history.
Every rebellion is personal
working for your own soul.
Every election chooses
or refuses me. And this
pope now they pick in Rome
is my pope and he's the one
against whom and for whom
all by myself I have to launch
the New Reformation,
just us. I sit and watch
the pictures swarming
towards my soul
image by image enclosing me
in a world I belong to
by beholding, a world
that wields me by images.
And it is mine, my world,
in that I have no other.
My war. My women and men.
My money. 'The fangs
in my muzzle glisten
with attributed desire,
lust for things I never knew
till you showed them to me.
Everyone is like this.
Everyone goes to bed at night
secure in that anxiety.
Everything happens to me.

19 April 2005
(End of NB 275)

=====

But when I was weary of history

who was I? Scum shot
in a bell bag nobler still.
To be is to be more.

A more mid friends. Splice
mine thine. Archaic
endearments lilacs and.

19 April 2005
(Start of NB 276)

IN THE GARDEN

Where were they?

They were catching an hour's sleep
poor tired men

caught between the wood and the stone
one glass of wine between them

and sleep did the rest.
They heard nothing of what the man did,

there are no witnesses of that encounter
between the exiled king and his shadow,

shadow of the mountain of the sky,
loud sobs of the matter world

never yet heard.
They heard nothing.

What color was their sleep?
One said Blue. One said

it was like a pearl, our sleep,
a pearl that slips between my fingers

and gets lost in seafoam.
My sleep had no color, said the third,

but it had a sound,
like a flute played badly by a child

so the sheep snickered and I woke.

And around their sleep
some iron thoughts were thinking

swords scraped on rusty filing cabinets
typewriters crashed on the sidewalk

and they were not sure.
Symphonies end even.

This feeling they woke with, this failure
(it felt like failure – now the flute

played well, oboes sailed in)
would not leave them. Ever.

He looked no different.
But he looked at them

as if they had never seen him before.
Did they even see him now?

You slept, he said, using
the polite plural. We did.

You slept and did not see
what I did and what became of me.

So forever you will be citizens
of this Garden of Almost Remembering,

waking and sleeping and writing things down.
And I will go on dealing with what comes

while you are sleeping. For this I came
into the world: to change your dreams.

That's all. And give you mine.

19 April 2005

sent to Shiv for *Wildflower*

YESTERDAY

1.

Yesterday is to tomorrow as
one is to never

or I saw a field
with crowd arising

too many to count.

2.

Count birds?
A waste of time,
there's always more

and less, always
more and less of anything.

3.

Then becomes now
now becomes then.

Yesterday is to tomorrow
as one is to one.

4.

Spiritual intolerance
is the worst sort ever

blue flowers sailing up my lawn
and who is willing to be me?

Then the moon comes up
over the summerhouse,

girls in white dresses
chatter in Russian

I mean of a cream tea
served on silver

I dream of a hand
handing me things.

19 April 2005
(class practice)