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What would a god be like if there were eight of them
and each one a horseman or a falconer

wouldn't they be really just moments of control
superior to mine, better aim, smoother trajectory?

And goddesses of some number also, controlling what
scant expirings and floribund arisings?

There is a stone on my table knows more than I do.
It sits there, part of ancient ocean, Thetis touched it,

it was old before the first woman walked
along the tricky forest paths of their dry neighborhood.

And here is the stone.

20 April 2005

=====

As if I were the night
and you the park

triangular: the sandy paths
across the Deergarden to the wooden bench
where the woman in black keeps appearing
reading her book.

 This time
try to discover the title. It is thick
as Marx but soft as Marquez

judging from her little smiles.
The cover shows a sun with sunrays
ardent in a woman's hands.

I can't read the words.
Or a man's hands. Who can tell?
And even when they touch you

how do you know?
I sit down beside her, she reads
quickly, like a learned person
or someone greedy for the news

but what kind of news could there be
in a book? Such a thick book.

I need to make contact with her,
her soft pale hair, the small
golden glasses on her nose,

so:

A poem is like a beautiful story
with no ending, I say to her
in my own language.

Then she says something to me in hers.

20 April 2005

MOROSCO

mode or sashay of the Moors
those dusky Sufis of the Ponent

old end of the Common Sea
not common to me, not mine, no more,

the fell Pyrates on their waves
rob me of my serenity.

And thou art one surely,
breast disentangled from bodice,

copper hair entangled with sunlight,
snickering of small swords,

a cutlass in every lady's hand.

20 April 2005

=====

Put any two
together marry
oats and be swan

genetics
are perpendicular
top the physical
arise (...arise!?)

into the nomain
of telling
earwolves lurk
their golden eyes
our only light

to go by, any two
take you to Troy
where you languish
unloved by war
the eyes of the dying
also regard you
wonder who you are

I wonder too
I bring you back
chastened by my
provisional identity

(the one who
talks to you
in your head when
you read a word
or better than
any word the moment

when you read
what is written
in silver light
in any mirror)

what word?
a word I knew
that knows you now

and all you have
to go on is guess
ever after
the color of my eyes.

21 April 2005

This bronze knife

surplus from or
so much for
the Trojan War
or Fourth Crusade of

all things coalesce
and all times are one
around the phantom
of a godly strumpet

hidden in the heart
of war. Helena.
Destroyer, Durga,
Deianeira, all

of what must be
or be destroyed
in the shape of a city
high citadel low hill

Pergamon in Brandenburg
where an island has to play
a hill's role in such flat
country or a little chapel

hidden in the woods,
that war is over
my guess is after all
as good as yours

webfingered halfnaked
spring sunlight so
much skin for such
meager poetry and

still I crowded on my lute.

21 April 2005

AGAINST AUTHORITY

Lordship is an odd duck
among our recencies.
Who would believe outright
the Pentecost come down
in shingle, gravel gospel,
the *Sprite* of muchness
trilling through webspace
to guide us home? We have
nada. The blue coat
pharmaciaian with half a sonnet
stuck up his cuff, we have
syrup of squills and senna
and virile unguents coarse with sandarac
to orange your easy afternoon
you girl at the head of the stairs
and sunblaze your closed eyes
sunset citizen. O love
my lost entablature, so loose
my lute. Lose it, padre,
a man's organ not make sad noise,
desire's clamor must be general,
sphere's music and some Santa Claus
left over from a past life.
When will I rise up?
When I know which way up is.
A conundrum clutched
tight in your paws.

2.

When I think of the sacred
galleries of Keats I wonder
why we fuss with that old Bible
like Uncle Omar reading
mossy Genesis when the Koran
was bright and fresh and new.
The news is what we're after,
Solomon, the permanent wisdom
embalmed in honey, Egyptian
alabaster, it has to reach, touch
a young man's lips and make him
speak, and then we get the goddess
Cinnamon running all through
our houses strewing bliss.
It must excite. The permanent
wisdom must be lost in honey
and found in mouth and
spoken out. It can't be slow,
solemn hippos snoozing in the Nile,
it must kiss or prickle or arouse
and make those sacred lips
which from the beginning of time
are only yours and mine give voice
recite a never written rhapsody of salt.

22 April 2005

PHOTO OF THE DUOMO IN FLORENCE FROM EIGHT HUNDRED FEET IN THE AIR

A chronicle of the coup d'état by which
a woman wins a space –the place of questions–

inside a man's heart, chronicle of me
staring down at the noisy shores of the Black Sea

I am often this airplane over everything I remember
trying to make the real into the imaginary

so it will love me back and the waves
wash away the differences I used to love

the heartbreaking aria of the doomed Protestant
lover in Meyerbeer's opera, and wind

wind, cold for April, I quiver
on the way back from the mail

the government holds me in its hand
what can I do there are curtains everywhere

the coup d'état snug as a girl's lap
history has such soft skin

any touch changes everything.
Copper band around my head or cowl

just above my evasive eyes I am a priest
of a none-too-smart religion barely surviving

on the hopes of the faithful, the young
are on our side, and we have a handle on the sun

the whole sun, we owned
nothing in the world but the light itself.

22 April 2005

OLD PAPER OLD FOOD

Old food the tea
from years ago
dusty tea waiting in the pot

follow the woman in black
she shows me something white

hurry

people are choosing old food old old food
and writing about it to their dead friends

on old soft paper soft old dead friends

death softens things
especially people

follow me says the woman
in the black business suit
I know her so well her
clothes are new she is fragrant
of new things and everything
else is old

New things are our guides

museum guards Indian scouts

always follow new things

Follow me
she shows me
something white

then something white shows me a door
she leads me through
it is a lawn

 crows are talking
it is raining or just after
and the crows
explain things even I
can understand

look she says and there it is
a golden ring in the rain
a ring in the grass I give it to you

I picked it up and slipped it on

I am married to the rain

it fits on the ring finger heavy gold
a stone the color of rain the color of sky
just after it is busy raining

it is the ring of the other
she says she says
now you are married

married to the rain and the grass
married to every other thing

now you are priest and priestess of it
roofless cathedral, your chair is grass

your robes are water
you have washed everything away

I am afraid now

I want to go back to the new things

these things you show me I say
these things are old
this grass is thirty years ago for instance
this boiling water is ice cold
the tea is old, my finger is not my finger

nothing ever will brew
we are too far from sea level

but she doesn't blame me for complaining
the old food where we were
is not for eating, it is only for remembering

anything you remember is food

that's what it means,
the sky is a scoundrel who threatens you
but I show you something that seems new

follow me until you do.

Do what? Until you be new.

Show me more of what is white
something that is always going out the door

so I can hurry, hurry
and aren't you my door

the only way I move
through a speedless place
root-still or panting quick

to follow follow

to follow your white thing is the same as leading
or being a new thing or complaining
till you give it to me

with no sorrow or blackberry bushes
with a lot of rain and a tea
made exclusively of dust
ripening in the black morning

where the blue flowers hide inside the very grass they made
and the trees are beginning to imagine the rest of their sermon
saying always the same sort of thing and calling it new

just because I was never here before
never anywhere
never till yesterday
while she put on her new clothes
and led me away from all the soft tables

belonging is so difficult
because the mind is always moving

and everything else is old and motionless
or even new and not even you.

23 April 2005

=====

The long expedients
of not quite desire
keep close guard on
the closet door

a crucifix nailed to it
keeps the demons in
there are stranger
exhilarations than just gay

they live in there
I sometimes join them
going from my forest mode
or mountain manner

into that breathless dark
where sensation lives
timeless hence eternal
come home to my skin

retour à ma peau

from the iron city.

24 April 2005

BACH IN LÜBECK

Grim harmonics
spoil chapel listening
this Buxtehude prelude
disturbs also birds

something always lives up there
– pigeon, rat, an Attic
agathodaimon, serpent
in the rafters dining

on the eggs of both. Racket
of the organ's plumbing
whose primary music
scarce lifts above mechanic

din, keyboard rattle,
pedal work, creak of lifters
from pipe orifices,
tubes of plenty, tin.

Copper and leather and tin.
And wood. So much wood.
Everything makes noise
and into it now the Danish

fugue fixes its whim
to emigrate across the shallow sea
–sound like amber here
then sound like sand–

and makes us want to check out
of this seamy guest house
back to the sky, by fugue:
escape is flying,

flying means to steal
what is not ours, wings.
to ascend among
the luminous entitled ones

up there who feast
upon our musics
the way Gandharvas
subsist on fragrances alone

and smite the empty air with song.

24 April 2005

MIDDELSPRAKE

To find the middlespeak—
the bone between flesh and emptiness,
hollow structure that supports the tune —

music (I'm thinking of Petra Lang) comes
out of the bone.

Sun over mountain
summons it. Mountain over sun
summons me. I ride the shadow

the way dancers might ride the tune
till it takes them there, us there,

have no other vehicle.

How the reasonable
sound of a man's voice holds
nonsense together, even poetry,
and makes it

if not mean then *move*
as if all we have to do in life

is be somewhere else.

And him too the hymn tune takes.
As religion is the sound of it not what it says,
o sad adrift without Latin, Latin
was the whole opera
and all that's left now's the tattered libretto
full of curious taboos and unlikable saints.

Words move you by unmeaning,
where move means dislodge, hoist,
transport, deliver
to a place that is yours

only by virtue of alighting there –
but if you can get there
it is yours forever –

like this squirrel stealing
bird seed
 knowing neither verb nor noun
but eating along the song of his feeling

as we some dark regimen
speakless undergo.

25 April 2005