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Starting from a line of Elizabeth Kilduff

On a recent tunneling expedition

I found you again. How bitter
the vermouth was on the terrace,
how eagerly I fled from the hotel.
It is always a hotel. Always
wormwood (*Artemisia* spp.) to which
it is said the whole sea will turn
at the end of the world. There was
no sea. There barely was a world,
only the mountains that lit up like
Arizona sandstone pink at sunset
though they were marble, white
all the livelong day. And you were gone.
I had to reclaim you from the mountain.
So cadged a ride up to the Karersee
clearest blue water with vivid yellow
flowers growing down inside it
not the least bit green, strange, they
keep their actual colors no matter
what the weather, property of the sea.

I set out walking, the tunnel mouth was close,
I called but no answer, I am terribly
claustrophobic, I love you, these facts
are sentimental, psychological, merely true.
So I went in, shouldering the dark, wishing
I was an animal adapted to such place.
And there you were, naked at the end
of all my pretendings. You were shivering
too and saying No, no. I said No too.
Why do you always hide inside a mountain?
Why can't it be the sky? Or the hotel garden
behind the stone elephant crouching low
giggling among the crushed flowers?
You try to explain: every image
is an accusation. Every noun is blame.
And very soon you'll have to hide again.

14 September 2005

= = = = =

Spelling different words the way a teacher
of your new language, say Wolof, gives one by one
the items in his head he thinks are words
but who knows where he got them, for you
they fall from heaven, mother never told me
all the things I tend to say, did you, did yours,
aren't all the rules the fun a family makes
to make sure language doesn't say too much?
Language used to think with, language used to love,
yes, these are wonderful, but never language used to tell.

15 September 2005

= = = = =

Before anxiety
a little lizard
slate grey on grey slate
slips off and under it,
one less to reckon
before the leaves begin.

15 IX 05

= = = = =

And if the sun
tries to come out
tell her for me
the light's not ready.

15 IX 05

= = = = =

We need something truer
more like Nietzsche
an anger at the norm
that is itself the norm—

but how can you love wisdom and hate men?
That is youth's burden, the angry mind
to sense out subtlest difference. And we all are young,

15 IX 05

= = = = =

Nothing is as simple as it is.
Crow fever. The rain
brings brown leaves down.
Monsoon season almost not.

Almost not here. Streets
not here. Busy
telephones and fear.

That much we understand
storms dithering at the coast
and women dreaming.
I am alone on earth.

15 September 2005

= = = = =

Life is skin.

Turn your skin

back on.

Cure

the leprosy of clothes.

15 IX 05

= = = = =

What connection
is a touch
or worth a word?
Or which is true
if either if ever?

Why does matter matter so much?
She asked and hid herself among the cities.

15 IX 05

= = = = =

The bird with one wing
spiritual recollections
the sex inside the fruit
no it's a piece of pottery
shaped to look like the sky.
I wear it on my head
and pretend to be alive.

16 September 2005

AFTER EVERYBODY ELSE GOT TAKEN

A waltz for wheat. Rapture.

To be alone on a scant continent.

Strange music. I'm trying

to figure out where it's coming from

and who I'll dance with,

I who was always too haughty clumsy

to dance when there were people to dance.

So I dance alone, I learn, I learn something after all,

dance with wheat, dried cornstalks

wreathed round the appalling nakedness

of a man moving around on earth, learn,

go dance with shadows, they're always friendly,

even a man like me can keep a shadow happy,

more faithful than a dog but hard to feed,

o god the food that shadows need, I have to put

my whole body into the transaction

then what do I have left for me?

Sometimes I resent my shadow. Why doesn't he
(or why not call it she, give some hope
for a stricken planet), why doesn't she
make the first move sometimes? Why is it always me?

16 September 2005

From a line by Nathalie Shapiro

1.

Let the mind fall

shiny red apples from no tree

let the mind fall

a shirt you took off slips to the floor

let the mind call

nothing is happening

call again, my mother, my mother,

her voice, let

the voice fall let the mind

call, let the mind

be on the telephone

and no tree, no tree, but such apples

such apples.

2.

And when the mind falls
I will have only your body
ripe as the horizon
and full of electrons yearning for me

because it's my mind that falls
and your mind by the weight
of my fall falls too,
crashes among the spiritual shrubbery
bracken, fern, books, thorn, disaster.

When the mind fall
there is only the disaster of our skin
rubbing together in the old way,
Portugal rubs Spain, heart rubs brain,
busy sandpaper of desire
wearing us smooth.

3.

When the mind falls
the ships sails
out from the port and disappears.

I was the captain.
Sea fog was my house.
When I got through

I found I had sailed
already far inside you.
Together we listen

anxious to the surf
beating on an unknown shore.

16 September 2005

IN OLD CHINA

Meaning the character we wrote this first time
with a fat filbert brush breaking fibers pressed so hard
a woman standing next to a tree
pronounced “all right for you
if you can do it without me”
then nailed the big paper to the wall
satisfied with revenge o scholar
reap your lecheries from every field
he thinks she has forgotten how to hand.

17 September 2005

= = = = =

Every now and then I see the old woman next door
Joan Mulhare's grandmother being helped down the stairs
on her way to the boxy green ambulance it is 1940
her pale blue-veined legs below the blankets wrapped
varicose (very coarse) veins we heard she had
all that pain and not even a war yet
don't know why I see this in mind over the years but I do.

17 September 2005

= = = = =

To share it with the whole world
is to keep it for yourself

what she finds in her lap
belongs to, is a gift for, everyone

virgin goddess of the world
her pleasure our nourishment

17 September 2005

= = = = =

No fair
not talking

that's all I know

if you care
you keep talking

no matter what.

I am coarse
as any city is

I know only this.

17 September 2005

BIOGRAPHIA LITERARIA

Who was I really
all that while to come?

17 IX 05