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RED RESOURCES

I have forgiven them all
now to forget them
the squirrel tails
that give those rats
such momentary elegance

forgive beauty
for being visible
and forget her face

that is the answer
till the feeling falters

or is it only till
the squirrels have
finished all the seed and gone?

5 January 2004

I meant a politics of you
unwinding the machinery
the bluegreen feeling that just happens
when a thing is finished
even if it's not finished well
or something's put away
into its place and the mind is clear
for a minute or two, losing
your colonies after losing a war
no more Togo no more Kamerun
where are my legs
to stand, why is the earth
denied to those it bore?
A Latin question, the kind
old poems ask and colleges
yawn over for a thousand years,
don't get me wrong I'm asking
for you to be beside me
to live in touch as some men live in hope,
a cathedral is never finished
always a ruin, the great abbey
open to the instruction of the wind,
a roofless love, the woman I forgot
some called her turquoise

because her eyes were ocean
in that sallow place, *cubicula*
locanda saw Apollinaire
rooms for rent in Latin
for the students, nobody knows
how Flemish I really am
but those who have felt
my damp mustache sur la nuque
and breathed in my fantasizing breath,
Christ stumbling into Brussels
in Ensor's painting, and I am all
the other faces, mask under mask
until the simplest skin touches
you and goes to heaven, how easy
such a politics could be in we had a little
bungalow right near the beach
and money is only good in drugstores
on toothpaste and Vaseline and soap
and we eat whatever the fishermen catch
and they catch whatever we throw away,
this is the art history museum please
you follow the footsteps of the visitors
and see what they see, what they look at
longest must be the best, write it down
as your dissertation, who are you
to go against the current of the world?
I was a salmon once and look at me now

with a twisted jaw and full of lust
and the only way for me to move is up,
if you love me there is plenty to eat
shadows and warm tabernacles
and even among the avalanches
the rhythm of all things is our salvation,
we ride our world between our legs,
people fear me often when we meet
because some text is crumbling
from my mouth, reservoir and baptistery
and gentle old stone basin in a cloister
all the ruses of water, *o mirror*
of your stillness, hazardous face –
when the wind blows I see
what I will look like when I'm old
but I could be your beast until the end,
I saw my death year cut in plain marble
simple serif letters and numbers
like a tombstone in Switzerland, so many
graves I have had already, so many
certainties resurrected me in some
outlandish name that always feels
like hands, running my finger
on the glazed wood after the ice storm
when the dark morning was full of keen,
edges and lucidities and the power failed
and everything that stretched out

was sheathed in ice, describe me,
describe me, I want to come alive
as your imagination, I don't want
to do all the work, you too
become my symbolist, give birth to me.

5 January 2004

TWELFTH NIGHT

The dream people need me
and I need them. They come
and move outside the tent of sleep
I see their shapes moving
on the pale fabric wall, shades
cast by the dawn light
and I know they come for me again

I wake to inscribe their necessities
which are our histories, without them
I would not have a word in my mouth,
they bring a star this morning, and they bring
an old French province, a Belgian beer,
a person wanders naked in the woods
she uses her body to show the way, show
me the way, she shows and is the way,

words if interrupted turn back into body,
she says Wake up, the phones are dead
the amaryllis blossoms in the dining room
so learn a new language every day
the more you know the more the clothing
falls away, it is a little Gnostic gospel,
it is a man frying fish for you beside the lake

blue as childhood and birds are there
no less blue, I know because it's here
when I wake up, who else could bring
these things outside my window, could bring
the window for me to look through,
identify for me carefully the name
of the woman and tell me the language
that's using both of us now, only seems
like mother tongue, it is brassy dialect
of somewhere else, some other god
crept onto the altar last night,
there is always another color hidden
inside what we see, like a girl with
an amber lozenge in her mouth
you'll never know the taste of
till you kiss her but she runs away.

2.

Support me by the fabric
I mean the factory of dream
by which we are clothed
and dare to walk along the road

from this town to another
without apology for our feebleness
nakedness, only two legs,
only two hands, how will I ever

get there, a mile is a million,
and then I know that I can move
only because the dream people
are already inside my skin

all night they were weaving me
and now they go out walking
in me, walk me through the town
because no one ever remembers

and that is the little glory of us
we have to invent calculus every day
and learn a new language
that calls itself Greek again

but this Plato is not like I remember
and his Socrates is nailed to a barn door
and his Alcibiades is a girl in the wood
running naked as a fox or a forgetting,

I hurry along the road, proud even
happy, searching from crow call
to crow call, crows shout me the way,
crows are different from other birds

crows are left over from dream
they bring me to the heart of the forest
and lay me down to sleep, here
it is as soft as a city, here it begins

all over again, never stop dreaming
we will tell you a story, not every
story, not all the ever words,
just enough to slow you down

as if when I woke I remembered
a word is a kiss that comes from
inside to fill my own mouth first,
terrible meaning of telling.

6 January 2004

IDENTITY

Who am I, asked the man with the martini,
I don't know, I've never known
what your kind of people really are,
it always seems to be snowing in front
of overbright Christmas shopping windows
downtown and I have money in my pocket
why are you asking, and why me?
I don't actually drink. It's all relative,
Gilgamesh, Madame Curie, names get around
and life is suddenly over, wouldn't you say?
I wouldn't say anything. Your secret's safe with me.
Why are the vitrines so bright, why is everything
so deadly desirable? I feel like I want to get bought too,
please. In red silk, with gold thread, with music.

6 January 2004

PUGNA COL SOLE

The sunlight has its say
or way with me, I yield
more than the ice does
after the ice storm

 this

is not Italy, the sun does not win
but does win me,

 who

“lit the lamp” above the seeming?

the long natural uncoiling thought
that makes us children

 always

of what happens

 Tiny openings

in a flute control

the sound the whole hall hears

wooden flute bound with silver bands,

what do the hands do

while the breath tries to talk

all our life

 persuading instruments

to speak

–who knows us?

who cries out from among them,
those knowers,

lecturers in dream
from that strange
academy

just half a mile or so inland
from the beaches where a dark sea breaks.

7 January 2004

TERTIUM

To talk to the one
wounds, to the other
mystifies. A telephone
call always has
three participants.
The one you can't hear
hears you.
It is the moon,
the moon hears everything.

A white eraser
in the night wipes
all words away
from you and me
but stores them there
in itself, greed
of the moon,
never sated

we have to keep talking
fighting on the phone
scream at each other,
the moon's big silence
makes our voices big,
we talk so hard

to imitate the silence
of the moon

the moon overhears,
nothing safe
from the white ear,
it listens in so hard
it takes away
all feeling and all meaning
from what we say

and the moon will never let us be still.

7 January 2004

Then came the amaryllis
another color to talk to,
a ship, two ships to sail at once.

8 January 2004

NOT JUST THE LIKENESS

Not just the likeness of an hour
but the sky itself, splayed out
like Judgment Day across the earth,
infinity that builds its local
agency in pain, this dentist's chair
vista, trapped before the huge window
we live in fear and scurry when we can
except when wine gives its teachings
and a drunk man's head is higher
than the moon up there in scary
endlessness, as if a thought is ripening
however incoherent the crazier
the better, something loose and lewd
and out of all reason, pain turned
inside out that might be something
like the truth before he sobers up and falls.

8 January 2004

Larger, play the green larger
a girl who murders the horizon
is rarer than sympathy

an actual fracture of the circle
to let the new word in
stretched along her flank immensely.

8 January 2004

ENDGAME

Judge the signs the old
equivocations, chessmen
upright in the squareless snow

each one knowing how to move
and where to go, red ivory and white
ivory, they fight against each other

they do not need our hands
to make their moves
or our brains to contend, no,

signs struggle against signs
and that is the long sad
history of the world.

8 January 2004

PELLIS. PELIGROSA.

The skin is the organ of between
perennial negotiation of the distance –

battleground where in and out contend.
To touch another person is an act of war

or warning, an invasion of the very
landscape that is in such long dispute,

the Kashmir of the world, no one's land,
valley of delight, your own skin.

8 January 2004

To know everything
into yourself
through that gate

Winter music
what happened
to my skin?

14 January 2004