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THE STONE

There is a stone in my forehead
near where language lives

heavier than any word it seems to float
in the feeling-matter of my thinking out

I mean I can feel it, it feels rough
like a two-inch chunk of garnet in matrix
the kind you'd pick up anywhere on Gore Mountain
in the southern Adirondacks near where
Aaron Curtis lived, who's writing now
about a film he's making later,
words about images

about that other thing
nameless as a stone in the dark
that words and images and everything we make
are pointing to, whatever it is,
easy to feel, hard to say,

and there is a stone in my forehead
where nothing lives
and nothing has feelings of its own
I mean you can feel it too
here, put your fingers

on my forehead
right over the eyes, over the nose,
you must feel it there

something blocking language
something keeping me from talking
something that also is a word.

14 March 2004

SIN & LAW

Now the certainties
are chancery, where judges
sit in the dark
and guess what dead men meant.
This is called Law.
Its purpose is to keep the poor poor,
the rich rich, and everything undisturbed.

Law loves stasis.
All crime is mere disturbance.

But sin is different.
You can sin against yourself.
You can sin against the earth
and all men smile at you.
You can sin in silence
moving hardly a muscle
and faraway young people die.
You can sin in sleep.

Sin destroys the life of things,
crime moves things around.
The Law is on the side of sin and death.
And sin makes everybody old.

14 March 2004

=====

Catch these eyes napping?

I have looked on all

I wanted to see

and have gone to sleep

like Mother Ocean

to wake at midnight.

So much for me,

a man alone in the dark.

Everything is in place.

The women sleep in their infinite boudoir.

My mules shift their feet as they dream.

14 March 2004

=====
No word is as sad as any animal
the way you look at me also
sometimes as if you can't believe
this thing I am and try to endure

but one bright afternoon you
hurried across the room
and sat beside me just for a second
and you forgave whatever it is I am

then went back to where you were writing.
It was as if the moon came quickly
out of the sky and spoken to me
and then went home. I am still
listening to her dark word.

14 March 2004

BARTOK'S THIRD QUARTET

Fore-edge of the roof
of a moderate apartment house
on Grand Concourse:
a cliff
from which a Serbian river flows
flooding the astonished streets

*

There's always more books to read
always more people to befriend

This silence never lets you alone

*

Are there any
real reasons to be?
White blouse or blue bow
in nobody's hair?

14 March 2004

BRAHMS, STRING QUARTET N0.1 in c, Op.51

What could I have expected?

The glass was empty, the waiter
who seemed so friendly before
was nowhere to be found.

Look at me, somebody, I am here.

The chairs do their slow acrobatics
legs in the air on tabletops
and I still haven't paid my bill,
doesn't anybody care? Here I am
fat as a cello, loud as one too,
loving people right and left.

It is said that the dead take a long
time to recognize their new condition.

Is that where we are now?

The music is so alive,
all the listeners are dead.

This is the Bardo. At the end
of the allegro we will be born
yet again. The canals will stretch out
in the cold light of Slovenian sunrise.
we float along so close I can reach out

and stroke the wall beside us
and follow with my fingertips
the coursework of the brick.

And then the wall will end and the canal
debouch into the dark sea
which for all its marriages never
learns to speak one human language
not even this.

14 March 2004

(Olin, during the Colorado performance)

BRAHMS

I see his clean-shaved face
he soon would contrive to hide
and live all the rest of his time
showing only his eyes.

But for one minute the young
man showed through, angry, shy,
shallow even in an urgent way,
like a ship sinking in the Baltic

and men dying by the hundreds
in water just deep enough to kill.
Their minds are crowded at that moment
with all the other faces in the world,

the ones they loved or the ones they fled –
for them they set out on this fatal journey.

14 March 2004

(Listening to the finale: Allegro of the Brahms first quartet.)

LULLABY

By this small word to sleep
and wake and sleep again
remembering a city
I went to fifty years ago
and knew nobody
just a woman on a bus,
a piece of bread in the park,
a blind man singing down the street.

14 March 2004

THE DOCTRINE OF DIVORCE

Asunder, by virtuous miracle
a drift of rice. Sacrament
of separate. By the pigeon
on the church steps, by the shadow of the tree,
gingko, fruitful, along the sidewalk,
by the seeing-eye dog and the pelican,
by the digital clock in the jeweler's
showcase, by the strange implements
slung from the policeman's belt,
by the styrofoam cup in the gutter,
by sunset squeezed between condos,
by the bus rushing past like old Typhon
I pronounce you free again,
man and man, woman and woman,
each after your kind, alone
to harmonize with what happens,
to be free of your history, free
to make new and glorious mistakes,
to live with what you almost imagine.

15 March 2004

THE EVIDENCE

It's always time for another one
circuits close and lights come on again
I hear you breathing beside me

This morning it happens my back
is to you and you're sleeping on your back
so it's only by your breath
I know I'm in the world again
staring at the vague shaded windows
pale enough to run the guilt-trip of day
on me one more time. In Latin
a morning is *what is left*
after the dreams have sauntered
back through their ivory gates.

You sound as if you're dreaming.
troubled maybe but not too bad,
I sit up gently and look about me,
you are dreaming, you move
the way you do when you are dreaming,

a dream comes first, blue jays after.
Neighbor women start to ply their doors
and I can tell this light's not just for us.
Everywhere the dreams are receding,

cars start and drive off into survival.
Don't ever leave me, it thinks in me
as I look at your face, so noble and refined,
warm too as if the dream were marathon
and a dreamer's work is never done.

15 March 2004

LILIES

I love the smell of lilies – why?
Bamboo shoots and forced narcissi
and lilacs – they share a smell,
something like *fermented light*
waiting for me in the morning
and a few more buds have
opened in the night.

15 March 2004

Parenthetical letter, 7)

I wonder what she means by rose

could it be that flower I never understand

how to propagate and make flourish

is it because I am *so tight and silent*

in the chest, so *rushed*

into the *bell of her*

without a comma to call my own

that *little tongue*

that makes the story pause

so we can climb aboard and be

victims of its unrelenting narrative

no punctuation in the story of desire,

disio, désir, all slightly different,

a rose might be a ruin

a crater left when red exploded

under light's bombardment or

that is just clever

I know what she means I just don't know what I do

15 March 2004

POTSDAMERPLATZ

Call this the bottom of the night
the red lights you write their names in
when you don't want them anymore

place means something open wide
and nobody crowds you but they do
there are no statues and victory arches

fountains look this could be a
fountain it is part of your body too
I'm not the only one with feelings

it's all blood under somebody's bridge.

15 March 2004

=====

flowers bent in the wind
stay that way in the calm

staring at the earth:
there is no place further to fall

fancy words by algorithm
simplify or startle

be clear or be tremendous
like someone screaming in his sleep

15 March 2004

=====

No one
helloing
but the language
is stirring
no answers
lots of breath.

15 March 2004

=====

Who am I to play favorites?

Any mouth

can answer me.

It doesn't have to be you

with your seacoast, your ball of wool.

15 March 2004

FROM THE PERMANENT REVOLUTION

we sell our bones
from inside out
a radio transmitter
gives the federales
our coordinates
I can't sleep but
no part of me's awake.

15 March 2004

THE COMPOSITE BOW IS STRONGER

School bus up your canyon
I filled my pockets with scree
in case of suicide or scatter

too many pencils
growing in the narrow strip
of dogshit earth between sidewalk and curb

too many editorials
I have published in the *Indoor Wind*
or in *The Midnight Shovel*

too many listeners
for my bare ideas
put all the pencils neatly

in the pencil case and go to school
hang out with the other kids
and tell them what little you know.

15 March 2004