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THE MACHINERY

Be a letter machine
or did it hear
a leprosy machine
on Easter Island

a leper in their dinner parties
always to feel
sick with syntax and listening
the purities
of an attentive man
are shocking
this disease of caring
hearing sometimes saying

we all talk at the same time
a babble of privates
with not even an ocean to share
they try to take your food away

scientist breast feeding at table
mosque of a bread basket
forty years a teetotaler and
the world keeps getting drunker

the size of things is varied

to express distance from the viewer
there is no you and hardly any me

so it has to be forgiveness
there's nothing else left
now on the fringes of war.

14 April 2004

=====
It's morning it's almost politics
they feed and then they fear
they fly away so fast
some of them sometimes
strike against wall or window
fall recover
or never, I found him
the other day
blue jay broken
in the underbrush
I thought at first a piece
of Persian tile had fallen
from the sky
in this endless war.

14 April 2004

=====

I seem to be too tired to be aware
or what I'm doing do

a stapler trying to clasp together
unwritten poems on no paper yet

and there is something in my head
north of my eyes where a thought should be

just because it's light enough to see
doesn't mean there's something there.

14 April 2004

□!=)3=E735

Beautiful defilements of the spring
Kandinsky has a Primavera too
I saw it once and pretty girls in blue
sifted around me in the gallery

like a door the lucent slab of his desiring
all the geometry of color understood:
this is an *animal* we're trying to be
all of us, angles and angstroms and eyes blurred with tears.

14 April 2004

[Note: Fifty years ago the Guggenheim Collection of what was then called Non-objective Art was housed in a Manhattan town house. The panels of the Four Seasons were on display on the ground floor near the entrance.]

=====

And what if you were suddenly slain
with not even a chance to shake
your fist at the sky and cry Thou
hast conquered, o Galilean!

How terrible to die before
the end of your own story.
Before the resolving gesture.

14 April 2004

=====

Things to think about forever after:

why do I smell soap? Who is the living

heir to the Habsburg throne?

Why do finches turn canary yellow in the spring?

Doesn't anybody know anything?

14 April 2004

<late> =====

Night's lyric incoherence hobbles thought
happily. It is like a mantra
you were given by a master once
and then forgot. Somewhere deep in you
it knows itself and is still speaking.
Maybe. Maybe thought, or this thought
of yours (of mine) is only worth
having had for the sake of this garbled
version of it that sings so well.
The holy man was sleeping when you left –
you had no chance to find out what it meant.

14 April 2004

=====

Most things are like an ok party that never ends.

From Lakeshore Drive you understand that
dark means water, light means people.

You head due north, ecstatic with compromise.

14 IV 04

=====

Strange are the ways
of everything a stranger
always at the door
every road gets lost
the woods are endless
the book keeps going
but the reader falls
and stretched across
the blue sky the pale
lines the birds leave
light up like a map
in the dead man's eyes.

15 April 2004

=====

First I was dying then I was dead.
Before all that I remember nothing,
he said, something hurt me like a color
then it was gone and a lull came on.
How was the journey for you, he said.

15 April 2004

YOU DON'T TAKE MUCH RESPONSIBILITY, SHE SAID

Where could I take it
with every road out of the city
blocked by the Protestant police
and Catholics prowling junkheaps looking for fetuses
and Jews x-raying every passing car?

Responsibility is of course a flower
that has to be grown carefully
planted furtively somewhere far
in the rich soil of midden and manure.
I have to move it away from here, from my poor house
out into God's country *comme on dit*
and plant it in other people's excrement,
somewhere deep in the not me.

Show me the way to take it and I'll take it
all away from you and sneak it out by night.
But till then I will shirk every moral burden,
even the most obvious of my many faults.
Consciousness without an task to do is suicide.

15 April 2004

=====

after Jonathan Weed

Suddenly you meet an unearthed heart
an artless earth, a hearth unfired,
you meet a maiden never made, a spotless
syrinx whistled on by Pan, you meet a word
unspoken and a buried song. You say Come out!
and Lazarus dances up from leaves, his head
made of rotten dog meat, his arms
are broken limbs of trees, his mouth
has crumbling dirt in it, and steam,
and a little lick of fire runs where teeth should be,
Come out! and Lazarus comes close,
you smell the music of him, leaping, leper,
you know that under all the dreck
his human heart is hounding him towards love
like all the rest of us, I saw my wife
today and she is beautiful, I heard a leaf
fall and cut a word in half, heart was the word,
he art I heard, I was a man and practiced it,
and there the maiden was, all nice to Lazarus,
women love the hopeless best, she led him
to a healing place beneath the words.

15 April 2004

=====

It may be the last cold day
the flowers and the sky are blue
the grass looks cold

wood looks warm, sun
of evening, like an irish song.
Why on earth am I so sad?

15 April 2004

=====

A white tile
as from a bathroom wall
or Swedish mantelpiece

so clean
things know how to be,
how kind they are

things, any things,
messengers from the distant mind
to our temporary hands.

15 April 2004

<late> =====

The apoplectic surgeon discovers an organ
never seen before, his eyes throb with blood
but he measures its ramifications clearly
before he collapses into a dream
leaving the patient with his new geography
anesthetized among the sleeping doctors.

15 April 2004

EVALUATE

the lawn and is it suitable
and for what,
and those topiary clouds
always make me think
of July skies over Marine Park
where Marvin Gelfand
watched Joe Torre playing ball
and we were nobody
at all, always on the way
church by church, red glass
votive candle after another
but in France they're tall and white
and the only colors
belong on the saints on the wall
in their bibs and bathrobes,
in other words it's morning
now, time to program the day
so even if I fall asleep
the bridge will still leap
from Delano's cliffs to Ulster Landing
single-swooped, silver, a bow in heaven
and the grass will learn
to grow without me,
thank god a few things take care of themselves.

16 April 2004

CAUSERIES DES ROSES

The conversation of the flowers
in their bowls and vases
fills the little living room.
It is still a city
no matter how many times
I leave it, always
subtracting one more lover.
There are still people
busy with their breakfast
coffee, just one more cup
before the impossible diet
and I was always the one
who left, before the touch
grew cold and the words
thickened on all sides with
explanations nobody needed
and nobody believed.
Only the gullible flowers
in their vases who live so
quick a life that love outlives them.

16 April 2004

=====
Always anxiety is
so much a kind of
love isn't it

like wind ruffling
all those sparrows
and the grass they're on

we are unified
by what happens to us
the democracy of accident

rules the world
crazy as blue jays
suddenly dive by

16 April 2004

∴ ΡΔο-ΡΘε-[γ-μo-λ ∴.

But are you my Blessed Mother too?

I called you that suddenly half out of my dream
and suddenly understood it was true.

The different colors of you guide my life.

It doesn't always have to be blue.

16 April 2004

DOVE STA MEMORIA

I've got to get you to remember
starlight over the Subaru,
the roof open, Orion not yet
gone for the summer, cornfield
just plowed, carlights far away
and nothing moved. Just us
and nothing said. If you don't
remember then my memory
is wounded, stumbles, feels
like unshared fantasy, falls.
I need to remember what I remember,
not just think about it still.
Don't take that away too.

16 April 2004

<late> =====

Oak moss and linden
heart of tree
habit of being
then what revulsion
against kind

throb of cold night
on Henry Street
me wanting to buy
Amy a flower
Hawaiian Royal Protea
she liked for the weird
of it, couldn't afford
anything, subway
to her house and home,
a book, a loaf of bread,
a can of coffee

later we walked the esplanade
so many ships
all the world
came to us here
but we were gone.

16 April 2004