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## **THE WINGS OF THE BOOK**

Bible person, find me in a book  
lonesome in your dry valley.  
Sometimes the louder you talk  
the better you hear, like crows,  
it was in that life I learned  
to understand the speech of birds  
a little, their warnings, guidances.

Like candles you can hear  
I heard. The old woman gave me  
in those days the Bible.  
I read in it for hours  
about how a wall has leprosy  
and when to kill a dove.

Never did it think in me to ask  
what I was reading or why,  
reading was coterminous with being,  
how could I tell the difference  
I was five with a book on my lap  
and the book was as real as the lap,  
realer, these knees are not the same  
now, only the feelings don't change,  
only the book is permanent,

the dove and the wall and the weird  
old white women talking  
in a clean dry smelly sunny room  
and the book was between me  
and my skin, and the one who wrote it  
did tempt me and I did read.

This was how I learned  
that hill was the same as hell  
and Calvary a ramp up inside the skull  
and afternoon was a kind of slope  
with a man dying at the top of it  
and me at the bottom  
drenched with his blood  
in the form of shadows under elm trees  
as we walked home along Batchelder.

There may have been strange candy in my lips  
or a damp penny in my hand,  
things like that were transmitted  
when you left strange houses.

I read the book  
and the book  
turned into me,  
now I lean  
on the iron wall

and beg my Jews  
to let me in

o let me love you  
in your iron garden  
let me come to you again  
as Ari did,  
break down the Gaza gate,  
don't lock the book.

26 April 2004

## THE WOUND

Close to the wound  
you see only landscape.  
Hill and cliff, watercourse  
red rock and sunset.

Inside the wound you sleep  
a quiet meaningless release.

Wounds stop hurting  
when you live in them  
and there is no other  
place, no comparison.

Or if they hurt  
who is there to know it,  
you are the one  
who's doing it.

But nothing's done.  
A wound alone.

26 April 2004

**But is anybody else listening?**

The curve of light  
investigates each raindrop  
on the window busy betweening  
me with that magnolia  
singing in my neighbor's yard.

26 April 2004

## **IRONY**

Of course any man  
is irony,

a lover's cruelty  
I touch your body  
to change the sky.

26 April 2004

<late> =====

A diorama in a silky room  
animals tagged and one or two  
flying kites – cerfs volants – along  
the beach – Jamaica Bay –

subway not far – don't think of sun,  
think of the keen grey light of after rain  
when cities tell the final truth,

think of marsh grass and landfill  
mounded middens and a new street  
fresh laid named for someone dead in action  
named for a lover or a tree,  
Pine or Linden or a dead philosopher,

mere moonlight dazzling your eyes.

26 April 2004



## MERCY PLAYING AT THE FEET OF JUSTICE

sometimes reaching up to grasp his knees.  
The tree of life lost in its own shadows.  
I thought I would meet you if I waited  
long enough in your parlor. When that failed  
I crouched in your enemy's boudoir  
sure you would be drawn there by *Liebeshass*  
and there you were with naked footstep  
compelled by our interlocked necessity  
for we belong securely to our destinations  
and only when we fail them do we fail,  
for we are of the ancientest marriages,  
the bell tower making love to the sky.

27 April 2004

=====

Cold handle hot coffee  
how everything is charged with life  
and busy seeing,

but how can we tell except by listening  
to the savage reconciliation of  
everything that sounds?

27 April 2004

=====

*after Ethan Abramson*

**The stonebreaker left the valley imprisoned**

to borrow a cloud and leave money in its place,  
gleaming euro coins in the upper passes  
because a valley is (here comes the secret)  
always a part of your own body trying to get out.  
Like the heart trying to be a beehive in Germany  
or the lung trying to sail over the Bodensee  
looking down on children learning eurhythmy,  
all the pretty Turkish children learning to dance.  
Where has he gone with his stones?  
I'm afraid he's getting to work on the sky now,  
and strange pieces of bluish stone like slate  
only cooler are falling all round me as I speak.  
This is what fear is like, after all the breaks,  
the broken, the names of people right and left  
and all the children hiding beneath the lake.

27 April 2004

<late> =====

Who can have held more  
weight could blaze the trumpet who  
heard her from the Dragon's Gorge  
save me save from the cleft by Luna Park

o all the old things come  
back to look at us in the night  
as if we were dreaming them.

But there is no such thing as dream.

\*

Only some man with a trumpet  
stuck to his lips  
in a hard silence

his idlest breath  
an insolent music,

only the things we remember  
clustering around us in the night  
like guilty explanations after  
someone's regrettable remark.

27 April 2004

**WHEN THE GEESE COME TO THE LAKE**

*for Vince*

The man who takes care of birds  
takes care of the sky

when the sky comes down  
it brings the birds

and when they come down  
people say they 'land'

even though what they land on  
is water, a lake

by the highway, a little  
bit above the river, the man

who takes care of the lake  
takes care of the birds

takes care of water takes  
care of the sky,

the man who takes care,  
the man who cares

about the birds the lake the river the sky  
the man who cares

about the world takes care.  
The man takes care of the world.

28 April 2004

=====  
In the old Chevy at the stop light  
beside me on Route 9 just south  
of Poughkeepsie heading north  
is a face I recognize, in profile,  
smoking man, his hands light  
on the wheel, waiting, his face  
jowly a little with prominent nose  
and a long sloping brow, I know you,  
I know you, and when the light  
changes and your car and mine are  
mixed irretrievably apart, seeds  
in the cauldron of traffic, at  
last I know who you are, a man  
dead forty years now and as close  
to me as a name could be Jack Spicer.

28 April 2004

<late> =====

And what is here to take me to the wall  
where I do not pray, do not  
even pronounce the language right  
that might have a prayer stuck in it

I do not know their gods, père et fils  
et sainte-marie et la sage-fille  
who breath is in my hands now  
I feel her when it speaks

she is praying in me.

28 April 2004



<late> =====

How many people live in the tree?

I guess I must know the answer  
since you're asking me.

Always I feel like an envelope,  
people put words in me and take them out.

I feel their tongues licking me closed.

28 April 2004

=====

I wanted to be clear  
his hair  
around my shoulders  
how  
although it is still cold  
magnolia petals fall

29 April 2004

## YIPS

Golfers call them yips  
when a little tremor  
spoil the shot,  
spills the sugar  
from the loaded spoon.

Emergency in the nerves.  
Ambulance means walking.

I'm all right, it's just  
the skin around my body is too tight,  
my nerves remember previous rush,  
drunk without a dram, staggers  
home because a habit has it

and now all the sugar's on the floor.  
The neighbor's boy fell down in a fit,  
someone had been making him read poetry.

29 April 2004

<late> =====

And all the wool  
got worried off the sheep  
and red-haired Susan  
waited for a farmer—  
the milk flows from the mind

cobalt blue bottles  
of colorless events  
from which all colors  
take fire and burn

a kind of al-Cohol unknown to Arab chemistry,  
a notebook fluttering in the wind  
a rock waiting on another rock  
and an empty palace full of newspapers

things in their valiant timidity  
go on meaning what they mean.

29 April 2004

## TO THE FRONTIER

Just pine  
from the old  
thinking

*two*

*chariots took*  
*one me* to the place  
the palace  
where there was no place  
the a

and a person stood  
*ish* or *aner*  
who could tell  
with all the brightness

*aglaia* of the old  
story also  
shone around the Head  
*sh'china* or *shrin* or *scîn*

\*

whereby I was whirled or tousled  
as if I were and all I was

is somebody's hair  
in the wind of wild transactions  
afloat and a tangle  
and this knot, this little  
knot was me  
they told me

and nothing smaller  
than this little knot  
was likely to be found  
on this journey

\*

but I was not going  
I was hearing

I was not straying  
I was giving off

a little light of my own

\*

while your heart has the weekend off they said  
and the wheels of both chariots they said  
(aleph bes, resh, tav)

spin in the mud of your character they said  
the grass is walking up the hill  
and the stone is thinking

\*

was I sure about the number of chariots?  
aporia  
was I knew how to count?  
was  
when I read two is another?  
is  
how could two vehicles take one man?  
aporia and  
I wasn't a man I was me  
and even if I was it was a boy that was

a boy saw a porcupine  
its quills went backwards  
and he went forward  
he climbed a tree  
with some ceremony  
of rustling left and right  
and left and looking back

and all the pins and needles  
were pointing down at me

and like any traveler I wondered  
what he was after up there  
doing business in a tree

and with the natural romantic disposition  
of a child who never missed breakfast  
I intuited a heaven or whatever  
up there where he clomb  
as one said in those days,  
Gurdjieff was still alive  
and it was Pennsylvania

\*

yes pine  
yes up  
yes quill  
yes bird  
but the bird wasn't there yet

it was romance  
a dance in the head  
a lust in the bone

it was whatever  
is not here



suddenly  
made here

for example  
there is this

\*

then the bird came  
crow over Crescent Street  
low, on the grey wood  
of sea-wind-weathered fence  
stood

corn and tomatoes  
corn and tomatoes  
corn and tomatoes  
corn and tomatoes he saw  
corn and tomatoes and corn he said  
corn and tomatoes and basil  
king of green things  
he said  
and flew away  
to this day

a crow lives so close to forever  
you could never tell

\*

what grows  
is what goes  
    they said

what doesn't  
is what is  
    they said

these chariots  
go no further

you have to be  
your own wheel now

they said,  
when the yoyo at the end of its string  
spins and shivers still  
it is said to be sleeping  
and one makes it *sleep*

this Philippine amusement  
is how they told us  
make a world  
then make it sleep  
and while it's sleeping

make it dream

and this dream you give it  
will be me

but I still didn't know who is speaking,

is me the speaker  
or the hard of hearing  
is me?

I am a coven and a covenant  
I am born in transaction

I never saw anything  
I didn't become.

30 April 2004