

5-2004

mayF2004

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Recommended Citation

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IRIS HOURS

Iris hours. One already.

And slowly some level falls

down there, among the animals

we do not see, there,

aquifer, remember me

beneath all our houses

somewhere with that soft striving

water walks.

Rock, you long resemblance

I forgot the letters of my name

numbers. Quiet angers

and then a morning comes

everyone is still asleep,

every number is an abyss,

and the simplest ones are deepest,

the ordinary counting numbers

terrify, the depths of seven,
nothing fancy, just the infinite

gesture of the simplest six,
you feel her worry when you look at her,

trembling of the heart muscles
tomorrow a boat

or tomorrow. Help me remember.
So much is lost in the shape of things,

a bee hive, a box, a number painted
on the side of the boat,

the whole journey you try to solve it
abyss beneath abyss,

the quiet light and inside it so much seething
I cannot claim a continuity

I am no king of it.
A moveless leaf

ready to breathe a different message
telephone rude summons you see the moon

up there? no, it's daytime, dark of the month
it's full of jury duty, the wan light

deciding about the truth, falling
in and out of love, going fishing, spilling

the moon is full of what we tell.
No moon. Marauding raccoon maybe

has toppled your pot of basil. The king is dead.
It happens every morning for god's sake.

20 May 2004

=====

Slow horns vehicular

first vegetable descant
miracle you deny you think
you know the law that makes
these green things run your mind

a comfortable interference
with the actual course of events
drum solos an unpredictable
intervenes – no one ever dies
in Switzerland – blood call
and sickbay and old salts home

the cup is on the wrong table
the table's in the wrong house
you hear the horn again the horn
the wren the heron flies over the pine
things balance exactly in time

or else time, effendi, is just that balancing
act as if you understood the white
flag the amber beads the thingliest
wine ripe in the musts of Isfahan
the law is what they give us to break

thus energize the more active population
in planned directions of transgression
to make the rebels ineffective by
always giving them marked out boundaries
(crime, sin) to cross, into predictable
hence detectable behavior, safe in the mean
edgy binary structures of the law

careful lawgivers devise strategies so
those who keep the laws and those who break them
are both comparably disempowered
he said and I hadn't realized till then
that he and not I had been speaking
and I wondered who he was and I wondered too
what I had been saying somewhere while he spoke.

20 May 2004

<late> =====

1

a fox just crossed the road
and came up to the front of my house
and slipped into the yew hedge

2

there is a disease that women carry
sometimes some of them
makes your dreams stop cold
makes you see what's right in front of you
the plague of reality

3

I think the fox explained me that
or the road, a road
is like a woman, the road too is sick
the road carries the disease
called everywhere else.

20 May 2004

=====

the few colors left in the world

Vermeer blue

color of a shadow

walking

outside the window

something looks in

midnight, fox slips under yew hedge

in streetlight

a ship leaving the harbor will never come back.

[2 V 04, late]

21 May 2004

=====

(remembering Clark Rodewald)

It is one of the special gifts of the dead
that they let the living talk to each other
again, and often in a new way, often with hands
or in the shifting light of broken habits

the dead are nothing if not glass
we see ourselves so clearly when we look at them
we reach out and feel something hard as it is accurate,
he is not here, it tells me, but it tells me that we are.

21 May 2004

<late> =====

Something tells me three
peonies on the table
have a reason,
they're right, and pink,
and a few ants walked on them
of the sort that love the sweet
honeyheads of peonies,
what could the reason be?

What does color mean
or being able to move
as peonies scarcely are
or be open as they are
I never am for all my jive
my landslides in front of
every mirror that means
itself so much I mean
these two three flowers
translated from the Chinese
with careful gradations of tone
as if we rhymed some very
special word with silence
breviary autopilot
midnight dance give her to me.

21 May 2004

<late> =====

horsehoof red clay

means iron

iron red ocher cliff

rock Résistance Roussillon

we have defeated the fascists

and the fascists are still here

moving towards us

their horses have no hooves

their oil gives no fire,

a horsehoof

from the sky presses down

the great red clay cliff of Roussillon the Marquis

saw every day from his tower,

horsehoof, blood of the earth.

The sky is made of brick,

the fascists hurry towards us

dressed in bull masks, their breath

turns into money, we try

to throw their money in the fire

but there is always more, they never

go away.

The Marquis. The maquis.

The tower. Defeated

by the way people live

we move forward slowly,
a few thick books, a coal mine in Wales,
a bishop's amethyst ring – all stolen
from the sky or from the earth

words are the wind talking
we hear we get them wrong.

21 May 2004

ALL THE WAYS ARE WRONG

What soaks into the cloth
becomes your color. Sunrise.
The heart-shaped flower of the linden tree
...no, leaves. The flowers are small,
the tile path leads to the stable door,
am I an animal again?

You feel the long unease in all my questions,
the road has been too long, the marmosets
have infested the museum,
Darwin was wrong but nothing was righter.

Nescio. Like a fruit given to a friend,
this ignorance of mine. Ripe pear, ripe mango.
This ignorance is sweet, complete,
empties the head of half-truths
so you can truly sleep then truly wake
knowing nothing, just being there
like phlox on the hillside, pink, white,
yesterday, today.

22 May 2004

=====

A heap of stones
holds something down.
I am glad you came,
you've been different
since you were gone.
Now you seem to be all fire
quiet, knowing
so much less, wanting more,
wanting me. The feel
that everything can happen now
like the bridge between Sweden and Denmark
realigning the currents of the world.
To make a road
where not even land was before,
It's as if we were people again
not pine trees on this headland – so
long I have waited for the tall
ship I must become.

22 May 2004

=====

God inhabits only strangers

I want to meet every person once
then I will know God. Twice
is already a habit. A dependency,
a weakness. *Never again*
is the best advice. Everything once.

22 May 2004

=====

Shape of bird that flew over me

a dark shape

not just because between

me and a white sky

a shape dark in itself

body blunt wings wedge of tail

a glyph on marble

portending woe? I don't think so.

A sign portends a system

and system is sinister enough,

gives something to work with,

work free from.

The escape.

The bird of course is gone

and every bird is a hieroglyph

means 'going now,' they are

beautiful because they mean

nothing stays. They come through

the door of the light and say so long.

22 May 2004

But what was that bird?

I'm asking names, not meanings.

<late> =====

Parts of machines I don't know the name
but she changed her name to Luna
because it's what fishermen catch at night
and yank out of Menemsha waters
to thrash around in their shallow boats

three men standing on practically nothing
and there they are at dawn
and the moon has taken her home
around the corner of the sky

and one more story tells itself instead of me.

22 May 2004

=====

It is time for this thing that knows itself to be rain
to spatter on the aircraft carrier deck
in no way like a boat except it floats
inglorious machine approach approach
in no way like a bird except it kills

23 May 2004

SURPRISE

is in the nature of sentient life
or as Professor Klots remarked
irritability is the characteristic of
all living systems,

what a way you have with words,
what a sky full of rain
and no rain falls

I would kiss you with that fabled *kiss of no lips*
we read about in Persian books
when the poet drowns underneath his words
and the squiggles of the alphabet come alive

and the final, fatal, *caress with no hands*
before which the whole biology department
trembles and sweats
soaking its leaves and lattices,

I want to be a peach on your tree, señor,
the whole world is screaming out the truth.

23 May 2004

=====

It's a strange game
we play
with sun in it
and wet leaves.

23 May 2004

=====

Gets warmer every minute.

The Truth Patrol

with frère-rogères and white duck hats

slashes through the drunken shadows.

23 May 2004