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THE MECHANICS OF BELIEF

Park beside a big truck
it will shield you from the sun
from the wind

you can read
the ads and inscriptions on its flanks
an outline map of New England say
showing all the towns it services

or a picture of a palm tree
bearing fruit.

Dates, coconuts.
I live for difference.

Imagine I cared more than I did.
Imagine the unitary ease
of saying I love you Stay here Live with me
to everything you love
and then what

when all the ten thousand things
and hundred thousand persons
assemble on your lawn
and jostle to climb up your stoop

and where is God then
when you are alone with all you dared to desire?

29 October 2004
South Hills

HOW PINDAR WORKS

*His ode is like a
haiku with a hole in it*

the hero falls through
falls upward through the dawn wind
of his own coming to be,

coming with words in his mouth and some bright
shining thing in his hand,

how well he uses what he has or what he is,
the genetic calculus scatters backward
patter of gravel
falling with no apparently no pattern
but a hero rises

like a river from the rock
like a hawk hammering the sky

backwards, backwards
from great consequences
intuit *a tergo* simplex causes

as he beats back through his millennium
grace by grace, for was he not in fact the one
old Lincoln had in mind when he wished
one day in Illinois to be a girl instead
and wear starched dimity and tell lies
that would make the preacher blush

and switch through the sexes through the tenses through the doors
until every room on earth belonged to his light tread

and have done (pour en finir) with all
the useful lies of politics forever,
Abramendax, who split
our country so bloody deep
we still make the mirror crack and bleed
when he looks into it,

o it is vengeance enough to be born
and not everyone God loves is born with rubies
studding his bassinette and a snake
crushed in his little hands

and yet the hero is, snake after snake until the stars
relent and daylight comes, he falls forward now
into the blue aorist of distance,
a yachtsman conniving with bootleggers
fetching raunchy rum to Amagansett

where the blondes are, ditzy by the pool
in the filmy eternity of women's clothes,
Achilles, Lincolnetta, all the glory-dazzled travesties
that live for war, girls on Harleys, ladies eyelined
choking the chill stems of martinis

and then a birth or two later
he's in our age
pounding doubles off the wall at Fenway
or scalawagging budget lines through Washington
a scarlet story and man among men,
a wound made by music,

that heals in our hearts.

29 October 2004

THE PRISON OF TIME

it is not Sunday it is a pleasant Friday evening
the light is fading

it is a Sunday evening in autumn, it is 1947, the war is over,
the light is fading and the long avenues of St Albans and Hollis
stretch out into the leaf-smoke dark

and tomorrow I have to go to school and the year after that
and the year after forever to school to work to do the will of
another the will of forever

and some men are thrown into a prison of space
but most are born and linger in the prison of time

and every evening fades into the harsh glare of tomorrow
and no one's hour is his own

and all my life I have been learning how to pick that lock.
The door opens inward. The prison
can't follow me in.

29 October 2004

GAMELAN

Try not to understand.

Two dancers bearing fans
dance on their haunches.

The body is not the body
does not refer to the body

the body and its way
its long sad glad way

Not at all.

 These
 swaying hips are not love's
cradle, no babe is born
from this opulent curve.

The body is an accident of inscription.

A piece of tin.

No, it is bronze the things they beat.

Yes, bronze has tin in it, tin is what makes copper sing.

Coming into the sound
sweet incense

Language is smoke.

Amongst music and dance

language has no more power than incense does,
shapes a little, caresses a little, pervades.

But what does it pervade?

New music in old forms. I know this trick,
I live by it. Symphony. Dharma Swara
of Brooklyn.

The yelp of metal when it is beaten.

The howl of bamboo when it dares to breathe.

29 October 2004

MAMMOTH

Mammoth
understands time,

deceiver combs out his wool
and says *shlaf nu, chint*
and he sleeps

thousands of years pass
and his body is brought to museum
but he's not in it

men and women comb his matted wool
polish his tusks
estimate his DNA (don't never ask)

but where he?
He has gone off along Great Perpendicular
playground we call time

frightened he was by little mouse
mouse of minute, sixty mice all lined up
and he ran from where time could find him

hid himself in heart of time.

30 October 2004

BAGATELLES FOR ALL HALLOWS

Ink spills
printers break
computers crash
clay tablets
crack, paper
burns and still
you're reading this

*

A now-brow a real
maven of the moment
said to his mother
who needs you any more?
Today is history.

*

Spiritual spite
keeps churches bright.

*

A Kiss

I tasted something in my mouth.
Since I hadn't said a word
for hours it must be me
so I'm talking now to tell
you I taste like this.

*

The worst thing about war:
it makes men read the Bible more.

*

How to Read

It's when you come to the end
you're supposed to breathe in.

*

The Tradition

Foundering despots look for help
from poets and sentimentalists.
Bhang-crazed Sufis sit around
in Cairo mourning King Farouk.
The sun cracks on any pyramid
and Thales' celebrated water flows
out of the egg of time. *River,*
river, all my days one poet rants.
Another sneers at such drivel
then wonders if he didn't just say it himself.

*

My aim is true
the target lies.
An arrow
adjudicates.

*

All over the world
the golden arches mark
the Abomination of Ubiquity
standing for the marketplace.

*

Elegy

It's easy to be mean and funny
but be mean and funny and smart,
that's hard. Though it's been done. It's been Dorn.

*

I simply wait to wake to write
down the thing that waits for me
at the intersection of intercession
moment and man and yearning and some ink.

*

If I have nothing
better to think
be silent than.

*

Bildungsroman

Fujiyama. Climbed it.
Niagara. Drowned in it.
Parsifal. Sat through it to the end.

But when I left the theater
I had become the hero
or whatever he is,

noble, ignorant,
somehow sacred—
I had become a man.

*

Some things to be sure of.
Small, small
fits inside big.

She walks along the room
carrying nothing.
And brings it to me.

*

Martyr

I don't like dumb surprises
tied to a tree and getting worked over
sebastianated with divers
darts and all the while
leaking my diesel where it counts.

What do you use numbers for?
Or are you just moving your lips
without saying anything but me?

30 October 2004

POUND'S BIRTHDAY

In Idaho they'd keep this feast
if they had it.
In Paris they remember
one red hair on the bathroom sink.

We stood at Merano
on his Ghibelline roof
watching the busy German tourists
do the town.

He meant everything to me
before I learned to mean a little of it
for myself. Not much.
How good he really was. And otherwise.

30 October 2004

=====

Certainties, alongside

Naufragios. Cabeza
de Vaca, ambulance
goes by. Open the door
and let the man in.

Who has history killed now?
I am a cabin under the sea
by the time anyone thinks of me.

No body thinks, some part
of some people do.
There is a drug called Hydrogene
that banishes old age.
There is a drug called Suliphur
that makes desire
into a tall tower of its own,
fuellessly burn.
There is a remedy for me.

30 October 2004

=====

The Church
of the Transgression
often called The
Little Church
around the Bend.

30 X 04

Gathering answers

a gate on a cloud
hung,

I halt,
you habit, we
from one vine swung

arriving, arriving
like Japan like do I
have any rights at all to
tangle with the salesmen
we bought the sky from?

31 October 2004

=====

(for Bagatelles)

One good thing about TV–
it keeps them out of churches.

31 X 04

=====

A personality change,
affect, mute disaster,
leaves fall, lawn
littered with what I meant
I don't mean now,
Zionist of bedrooms.
Geese shout their way
to the river *darkling* I follow.

31 October 2004

HOSPITAL

I am here for your sake,
a lost king on a dead horse
wished he had a cigarette

among all these men without wives
at least they have lives
and he has only Ornament

celebrity, lineage, has only love
and none to pass it to.
He never really learned to breathe,

all that taking in and giving back,
exhausting. Demeaning.
Jaunty nurses sway along the aisles.

31 October 2004

=====
**The day I stopped
sounding like myself**
and became a rough draft
of someone else.

It was like having a mild stroke
you only know about weeks later
when your left eye looks
weird in the mirror and you

can't read Portuguese any more.
O but the nights
when the women who like this new man
come up from the subways to know me,

I translate Rilke for them a while
then they enlace me tight
in fleshy arguments, their
birthparts console me for having been born.

31 October 2004

=====

If I weren't you
who would I be?

31 X 04

=====

The mirror reverses everything,
not just left and right.

My gray hair is red in there
and my somber mug begins to smile.

31 X 04

=====

Dip the pen,
the pen can do it.

The coast is far
we have to fill the distances
with sea to sail there
but where will we get salt?

Spit and piss and morning dew
bring us into the world
and the world rains.

We are born (he forgot to say)
between water and water,
holding a little fire in our teeth.

31 October 2004