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=====
Counting, they are counting
out there, they wake me
with their numbers.

Snow dawn. I think
somebody is building a fence
or knocking one down.

Nailing signs up.
But there are too many nails,
too many words

too fast sometimes, and too far,
hollow hard sounds
coming up the valley.

And then I know
what they are counting,
the lives of things

geese and ducks and such
little things with souls
slaughtered before sunrise

shotguns on the river.

13 November 2004

=====
Does it know me now,
silence after a wound?

I would have jumped out of the world
if I had a knife or a staircase,

an asp to fondle
and let it taste my midnight.

It's easy for morning
to make fun of such things

when the sun hovers on the gazebo
and acts like my friend.

Earthquake under always.
The untouched body

of all we almost.
Walking over the harbor

uncountable fog.
I didn't, and I am.

13 November 2004

=====
Sometimes all it needs is water
to revive the starfish

then it pistons off
out of the immediate

neoteny afternoon.
Someday too

we will be all arms
and no faces

but it will be
wet midnight round us.

By expelling the past
we move forward

not what we call the future
but is just another part of the sea,

another layer of eternal salt.

13 November 2004

L o n d o n

The organism understands
movies backwards, we move
sideways, the intersection
of all that we call *this*, now, here,
this little London that is the world.

*

City from which my father's mother came
is the city where I last saw my father,
his revenant, climbing onto a bus in Holborn,
something happens in me when you say your name.

*

It is not magic, of course,
it is the sparrows in Russell Square
or the statue of Charles James Fox
trying to persuade a homeless man
huddled at his feet that
all this misery was foreseen
two thousand years ago, Cassandra
saw it, her strange bride price
from a fatal god, to know all this,
know all these things now always,
to know even us, my man, Fox
and derelict, plane tree and sparrows,
hotels full of American scholars,
her long hair burned first on the pyre.
And what she knew is all we'll ever have.

*

The sound of you, she said,
the rage you also knew
against all that forgetting,
 knowing
why a girl is like a little church
tucked between buildings in the Strand,

Wren built it, Christians of all stripes
say their crazy masses on her altar,
she sees serene across the busy street
staring at no one.

*

That is the mystery of time,
there's no one home
but we stand forever on the clean white steps
plying the bright brass knocker
lost in hypotheses and buses pass.

*

Furious analysis:
man eating breakfast,
the sausage on his plate
once watched the sky
et cetera, the eggs
are phoenix eggs, the fried

bread was someone's Eucharist.
For all he knows, his tea mug
held a leper's false teeth last night.
He knows nothing. He plies
his knife, his teeth are real
enough. Salt, brown sauce,
sugar in the cup, morning in the window.
A man on fire, his mind
mad with women. And night will never come.

13 November 2004

=====

Let me reach up inside you
and pull a language out

let me use my hands my teeth
let me swallow the resultant grace

micro-moisture from that subtle
gland you don't even know you have

that makes you wet me wise
us both everlastingly.

13 November 2004

THE ANATOMY

As if the organ
itself renewed
the marketable Ocean
that is you.

13 November 2004

Amaryllis

Give it to me. No.

Amaryllis. No.

Recede from the Venetian carpet slung over the balcony in
Crivelli's masterpiece. Fuck you.

There is a band. I can't hear it.

I can't hear you. No, I can't hear *you*.

Amaryllis. They make me listen.

And you, you too. Ottoman nostalgia.

I lust for thy jerkin so many rains have shaped around your breasts.

[silence]

Left wing encomiast! Rosa Luxemburg.

Bakunin on you in. No.

Not a dialogue. An outrage of answers.

Who's asking you. Dove wings, hawk beaks.

Noisome Needles hot at midnight. Midnight zero.

13 November 2004

IN THE WESTERN REGION

Another language is so far away
and a person needs to be neat along the chosen road,

comfortable hotel, decent trattorias,
women to speculate before you meet.

The first night the unsuitable duvet
too heavy and so sleek. The next night

that sycamore leaf pasted to the windowpane
by wind and rain – eerie, almost uncanny

its pointy little fingers but you can't tell why.
So many rooms, coins left for chambermaids.

You knew you were where it wanted you to be
but who was driving? Was it that woman,

she looked so like a young fox
and talked about Habermas all the way home?

Even you never thought there's be so many hills.

2.

You were at a performance of *Fidelio*,
afternoon, the famous floating opera on the lake.

His gloomy prison has to work its spell
under the constant sunlight. Far beyond the action

some swans were spotted moving towards the shore.
She kept telling you fine points of the plot,

whispering translations of the interminable talk
between the slices of music. Music needs no story,

shut up you tried to tell her with your smile,
your fingers appraising the dome of her left kneecap.

Does the king know his subjects are suffering?
Does the bedstead know how beautifully you cry?

Which one is you and which is me?
And why are all these Austrians applauding?

14 November 2004

WOLFE'S LAST CASE

The thing I have to do
I don't do now.
Intersect, is all.
The way a flower

(*ich bin keine
Blume*) catches
her attention even
when she doesn't it

like it, dyed
marigold or azure
mum, shame
on colors!

and the vascular
families the way
they also intersect,
Farbers and Blooms

all cherrypie and charity,
you call *that* an absolute?
Simple explanation helps:
the deed was dismal,

the day Thursday,
the donor doubtful,
the dinner grisly,
the doctor girlish,

the dog dead.
My plane even didn't
land till Sabbath
when the organs

of the Christians swell
with unaccountable
presumption roaring
the complacency of calculus

(Bentham's, felicific)
stuffed ballot boxes,
lobster roe.
I hate this town.

It was my car
but I let him drive.
Always south
around these parts,

the sun always
in my eyes, I left
my sleep on the plane,
sat alert and counted

cats and homeless men
till we reached the door.
O god that door, purple,
double-winged,

stained glass grapes
of Tuscany ditzy fanlight
over it I went in
and am here still.

I'm writing you
because I don't believe
in letters but it's nice
in the library

the smell of cigarettes
and leather, like a gay bar
without the sweat,
I put a pillow on the phone

and locked the door.
This is where the murder
is supposed to be.
(Good name for our planet.)

Since I'm alone I guess
I'm to be the victim.
Fair enough but already
I'm sweating (smelllessly)

wondering which book
has my number, or will
the big terrestrial globe
explode with mortal gas,

is it even seeping now,
are my lips blue? But you
never cared about my mouth
except for what it said.

All that language and no spit.
I have been here an hour
reading Plutarch's Lives,
pretending to be thinking.

Snake in the drawer?
Poison polish on the Louis-Quinze?
The ceiling will collapse.
The floor gives way.

This ballpoint pen
my only weapon.
It seems to me this very room
I've lived in all my life,

these books my books,
these hands my hands,
just like Shakespeare
grey all afternoon and

the light is gone now.
Heron of Alexandria
made a room that thinks
for you, it tells you also

when it's time to die.
Nero tested it on some meek
philosopher who spent
three months on a treatise:

Hunting Clouds with Caged Birds
then slit his wrists in the tub en suite.
Heron built a steam-driven
float for a carnival parade

that knew its own way
and led the multitudes along
who gladly followed
and still will do

any prosperous machine.
Heron baked a knife
inside a loaf of bread
that leapt out at you

when you passed a magnet by,
but whatever good was that?
I am done with science,
dying men have used up all their grace.

I am alone with what I've done
and thought and said
and thought I said, a quiet
brownstone mind mixed up with living.

The page in front of me
describes the pointless travels
of Cosmopleutes the Curious
till I know how little

I myself have lived.
Not even Madagascar
for Christ's sake. So little
in fact I begin to suspect

I never got around to being born.
Fetus-fatuous I spent my days
mumbling heartfelt pronouns
that stood for no imaginable

nouns or names or you.
Out of the wall or bookcase
someone comes now
with skilful hand to murder the unborn.

14 November 2004

=====

In the night before his execution
he wrote a thousand-page *History of the World*
dedicated to the queen who sentenced him to die.

14 XI 04

=====

But it was a different hand
the scar was on,
 its palm
unblemished, a stormcloud
over the citadel, a different language.

14 November 2004

KNIGHT'S TOUR

It takes a while to explain it
but once you get there, the tram
chugs slowly noisy up Western Avenue
by the disused cathedral and the whole sea
is at your feet as they say, the ones
who have paid their five-pintle fare and gone
all the way to the top of the hill.

I have other cities for you if you don't like that.
Octopus dinners under the breadfruit trees,
workers skiing through the financial district,
easy-living women by the tobacco barns—
a city means doing something in a special place
and coming back. Outside of town
there are no special places,
just space and time, and weather, and eternal grief.

14 November 2004

=====

Not the steeple, not the horse,
not the girl, not the coin,
not the river, not the house,
not the tree, not the road,
not even the moon. The other thing.
The other thing.

14 November 2004

How sad that conspiracy theories are all untrue. We need them so much, they are the very things we need: the *truth of the alternative*, what the old people called *the thing that is not so*.