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THANKSGIVING DAY 2004

The permanent America
over my hill
where the crow's calling from
and comes now to 'my' tree

How fast the clouds move
from the southwest but it's still
down here, crow
you tell me so much

as much as I need
but only a little bit I understand.
What we do
becomes America, the rest

is that pure myth of stone
water, wind. And wind
is just another kind of rock
on which we stand,

a stone that breathes for us.

25 November 2004

HEROIC

I feel like Aeneas in Book VIII
this morning
walking in my backyard
the trees
clouds moving fast
the sky my only river
some bird calls me from heaven.

25 November 2004

=====

The old lawn roller
has been rusting in the underbrush
for forty years,
it was here when we moved in,

it is a part of the ecology
god alone knows what role
its crystal hollows its resonance
its chemicals play

in this little world out there
I see clear only in winter
before the snow comes over it.
From which a mosquito

comes now to bother me
me the center of the world
with its analects buzzing
too quick to understand

but I think it is answering
the question, things
are their places, no difference,
go inside before I bite.

25 November 2004

=====

for ER

Catch hold of it
no not of salt
a sea she waded in
small,

the baptist among
a scurry of doves
not all overhead

some scooted at her feet
awkward white
a message fallen
among simple men

she was not
she prayed
to be part of what fell.

25 November 2004
Boston

=====
Catercorner to a waiting
a room felt swoon.
No sense. Desire
wails drunk beneath
the skin. Everything
calm. We wait
for what we need.

House. Impossible
resident. Stormface
wild liver, everything
calm. We need
a mountaineer
around here,

a mountain to climb
to get above the radio
the static is built in
to the signal
the heart heaves,
ekelhaft, Niagara
of sentimental gush.
Zambezi. Schaff-
hausen. Iguaçu.

Noises the same
the whole world over.
We need for what we feel.

26 November 2004
Boston

=====
Sit on the curb beside me and console.
The sun is out and the museum closed.
Isn't this what we mean by
having come beyond culture,
beyond the system of the world?

I was a king once and you were too
which is how we can bear to read such stuff
as old romances, flags and lances,
dented chalices and I think of the first woman
who had this thought: They caught His blood
in a cup then guessed which cup it was
and told her lover go find it for her

and he went and the world began.
Isn't this the gilded paintings of Siena,
isn't this Babbage's machine, Novalis' hydrangea,
Proust's treacherous cobblestone?
Everything is looking, have I found it yet?
And what was her name when she was young?

26 November 2004
Boston

SAD

because she married outside the Company of Love
a small neat convenient husband
who cluelessly enmothered her till the kids
—male as she could make them— ripened
eating out her heart and the lake was cold
and all the letters her true love the Owl
sent her she sent back unopened and wept.

26 November 2004
Boston

CAUSE AND CONVENTION

Privilege ripe. Be then a wary.
Be through a new way.
Be now or after most be after.

No business sense waiting for the sun.
Pack the stories up day after the feast
pack up the stones. People run

is what they do, people run
to do what people do, how else
could they be somebody ever else,

the terrible burden to be me
and nothing carry, have to marry
some other me and then listen,

listen eighty years to grow wise
and then. Live in the boneyard
read by corpselight

measure your yawn against the
crocodile's, breathe smoke,
forget everything and wake.

The hard aspect needs you,
breathe in everything that disgusts you,
love what you hate, even me,

the sheen of virgin light along
the undersequent surface of
your thighs, yes you.

26 November 2004, Boston

THE SILVER BOWL

rustic bar on the edge of Queens
shuffleboard and my reward
a little bottle of green soda chaser size
or one of those spicy Polish sausages
dead in a gallon jar like disjointed thumbs
don't think of that don't think of penises.
Be energetic and act nobly, you carry
every tantric habit home, America,
night yoga, séance, rap my table.
Then leave a pair of hands in wax,
hollow, like gloves from your own hands.

26 November 2004
Boston

LIKE YOU

I am tired of everything
except sleep.
And then I wake.

26 XI 04, Boston

=====

Silk brocade white dragon
on blue ground
stretched out over Bellevue Hill.
All the rest is me.

26 XI 04, Boston

=====

Desire is the sort of conversation
people are too stupid to forget.

26 XI 04

THE TEMPLE OF MERLIN

I need the word now
the cunning architrave
on Merlin's religion
built to no god but his own shadow

shown as a colorful mosaic
of Ninien (Ninuvien, Vivien)
on the wall of the apse
her arms spread out along the easy
curve of the walls to welcome us

Vivien with blue eyes and dark hair
but where her lips would be
a little golden word
has been inlaid among the tiles
a word no man can read

but I can read it,
it says **τρά**, beach or strand,
and means whatever she tells us
everything we do or say or know
is just sand alongside a vast ocean
that brings us on its waves
all the little things we have
then sucks them back some dat,

we are littorals, marginals,
and the best of us are soaked with that sea.

*

But who is Vivien
(Ninuvien, Ninien)?

One said: She was his mother
come back to claim him.

Name him. Come back to learn
what he had learned

in all those years away from her skin,
his beard down to his belly, his beard

down to the floor, she came to discover
what all that hair was trying to cover

the human form she had given him
along with her own god devil's eyes –

but she came to enquire
what he had garnered and made up and imagined,

and when he spoke his lessons to her
she sent him underground to ripen

for a time, ripen under tree and under stream,
everything we see and guess

is surface only, someone's face,
and he is under all, she set him there

to ponder, to bide his ripening,
in all the quiet dim espousals of the earth.

Our time is different, passes quick, his slow,
we hear him sometimes, rarely,

a voice down there
that must be his,

but he's not crying, it's a singing
mainly, like a little child

in clear voice repeating the nine-times table
or all alphabets from Aran to Nangchen

just so he would happen to forget.

*

But another
said: Not mother.

She was a woman
he had never been

she took the form
of that pretty little acolyte

who used to keep him company,
Vivien or Ninien or some such,

but the woman came in from
a little bit to the left of the dark,

she moved inside the pretty little girl
who sat on Merlin's knee

and fondled and got fondled
and so passed into that western region

he called sleep.

And while she slept this other came,

No Name her name was, or Noman,
Nowoman, and she examined Merlin

quizzing him all through the night
till he had worn out all his spells

—a spell means what a man knows for sure,
a word when spoken the world has to answer,

a spell means a knowledge of what is,
and what is never needs an explanation —

she asked for more.
Grow in the earth, Lord Onion,

grow in the ground,
bring up small blue flowers for your crown,

stay there until you chew all the roots
and piss the rivers full

and these same rivers will reflect
the textual madness of the winter stars

where our homes are
and all things are finally explained.

Read the stars in your body,
the deep scars of light

and sleep until that reading's done.

26 November 2004, Boston

PHONE

march of the voice
a cell in amber
sudden open to the air

φωνη

or answer

so many sounds so few mantras

although more than we suppose

when it is spoken it is heard
and silence turns away

hear me,
there are aspects when you hear me
when you are just beautiful
Berber rug, fondling the
underside of the weave

I touched the tree, made it weave too
in evening light, a slim girl tipsy at the party

the forest, ash, elsewhere.
Widow tree.

And how have we deserved our joys also,
everything earned, miseries and splendors,
built out of life parts, quarks,
these strings say me –

who can resist a pilgrim?

Evade Answer Remember

Forget Keep Silent Be there
for me

wait on the shelf
life of an article,
the the among friends,

object and interlude,
a thing by itself
is only an oracle.

Lizard on a leash
your far red dragon,
all I believe in are the old images
rising in a new mind

your heart on fire in the ruined chapel

—do I write for stones?
isn't anywhere that I can walk
with ease a decent path

even though we meet two pilgrims
coming down the steep mossy path
from where the lepers hide,

even though it goes over the mountain
into the next valley
where another language is spoken
a dialect mostly of water
but my mouth is dry there

and I can only come towards a woman
by pretending to be a man
and not just me,

a baffled transplant
from a bluer planet even
where we are given each other
fully just by being born

and bodies belong to bodies
words to words, spirit to spirit
as even your holy books say: *Bring
fire to the fire.*

But in your world they made the distances.

Bodies apart grow weird, uneasy,
soon diseased. The crèche
of sexual enmeshment
would make us all immune, my Spartans,
o healing fluidity, then language
—used all these years to say
Please touch me or I want to—
would move on to a higher saying
and Technicolor silences
exploding over the orgasmic ordinary

and a word —that now only
labels or remembers—
would suddenly give birth.

A sound would make.
And in the phalanstery of the heart
what dictionaries ripen!
And in the skin, the pluriverse of molecules
waiting to answer!
Your voice their singular array.
Your breath arrives them all everything new.

27 XI 2004, Boston

MANGO

As of a pen the tip dries up
or mango wrinkled but the flesh is sweet

untrust the surfaces—
we begin to forget allegiances

snowboard and so on, Melville still asleep
in the New Bedford rooming house

breakfast sausage trim hair and beard
clatter cobblestones trust the fog

be a nice street where no one waits
lonely as a lap speak Irish next

the way the dolphins do
waiting for the delivering hand.

27 November 2004
Boston

=====

The cynic is never far away –
why I hate dogs.

I suppose if I made up a catalogue
of my dislikes I'd find a cameo portrait
of me, cut from my rock,
my inner substance showing whitely through.

27 November 2004

=====

On the wheel
a brown leaf
wet from yesterday's
rain still enough
wet to stick
to rubber and it rolls.

We are the Kingdom of Mixed Blessings
where wet and dry
fight it out from Anaximenes

the man who took care of the moon.

We wind up being in charge of what we think.

27 November 2004