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OWLS

Owls,
yours now,

returning to them
because they

begin again
but we don't

know or why
but something's left

something soft
evidence

truth of night
and death and music

pellets fallen
and this year in Boston

the acorn trees
dropped few acorns

one's man's oak
is a woman

also flies
strongwinged

these trees.

7 December 2004
Start of NB 272

=====

We fall for each other
like peaces from the tree.

A year later
only the gun from the bark
still sticky in

our winter fingers.

7 December 2004

=====
What can be done
with a hollow book,
a fine new vacancy—

do you speak Spanish?
Are your borders
open by night?

What of that little man
who tried the mountains
and left only a bag

of papers behind him
where are they now?
Keep writing.

English, Basque, a wolf
standing under an olive tree.
A woman turning away

ear buds delivering
some kind of music
I will never hear.

7 December 2004

CORPUS HERMETICUM

is not yet the body of Hermes
elongated over us like a western word

“that was no river
but you crossed it,

no one there to meet you
but here we are”

Spinoza’s mirror, Halbwachs
looking into it,

who will ever see enough to see?

7 December 2004

[class practice, my incipit]

=====

Thank you so much for
lying on the ground
and letting the snow cover you.

Then when it got warmer
the rain analyzed the snow
crystal by crystal

and there you were,
a continent outspread
grown vast overnight.

Not long ago we were just friends
and now you're a kind of Australia,
hotter than Paraguay, smarter than France,

and all for me!
All because you lay down on the lawn
one night after mosquitoes and before the frost

and let everything happen to you
even me,
a man even meeker than the weather.

7 December 2004

=====

Watch the beginning begin.
Old song.
Forget the words.

Interview the albatross
for Christ's sake,
was it worth dying

for all that poetry,
yes, he says – a he-bird
he must clearly be,

a she-bird would have said
no way, I'd die
only for my young

and what kind of brittle
egg is poetry
and where does it fly?

7 December 2004

=====
Facing deer in mist, four
at the crest of the road

the hill the hurry
silhouettes against glare

the mist lights up
headlights coming

they're safe, a minute later
another one behind our house

on the path by the stone Buddha
stepping up this hardly a hill.

7 December 2004

QANATS

maybe never enough water
maybe everything is dry

qanàt: subterranean aqueduct.
old tunnels sunk in sand or earth
carrying water.
irrigation. drink. Persia.

Through our bodies also
mystic qanats run

feeding the seven flowers that grow only in the dark
& from whose seeds the Light itself is made.

7 December 2004

QANATS, 2

But do they hold water do they carry.

Ever.

But does a bee ever go down there
or a wolf?

What would a bee be looking for beneath the ground?

Every question is a trick.

Why is water wet.

What is water?

Water is what remembers.

Open the gates, we are in the Temple
masons, ahead there's gunfire, wounds,
hospital tents, remarks of the dying,
impatient tenderness of foreign doctors,
nurses' dresses slick with gore.

You're in the temple.

The god is listening
and hears no words of sense.

You are the temple.

The gates will never close.

7 December 2004

=====

word at last

to tell me
what I almost know

come down from heaven
where the blues are made
and here insinuate

a little chorus
even I can sightsing
until the end

when everything is known
and I come home
like rainbows in all colors

like an old joke
like a new girl in town
like a man alone in the night

happier than sawdust
busier than santa claus
pinker than easter.

8 December 2004

=====
Not as a sin – a something mute
like a failed comparison –
I have tried so hard – to be another
and the strength of anything
is its own sinew – it has no
sinews, it is a rock – rock
has no rock of its own – it is like
itself and nothing else –

its weakness is its strength
like a magnifying glass
doing nothing to the moon
–forget everything – soapsuds
in the canal and Santa Maria
Salute standing in for the sun
and no one saying anything
– light a cold fire – time

and time to go home –
soccer players from Udine shouted
the train rocked across the lagoon
and in sad Mestre I began
to remember – a friend –
long dead – important manufacturing
center – close book go sleep
causation as a science does not

survive the dialectic – everything floats
– flows – from sun to shadow
tide even here – inland – no water more
and everything still lifts away.

8 December 2004

CHANGING WORDS

Changing words to other words
Jackson died today
(11:30 AM at Cabrini Hospital)
changing his words to other words
of the consequences of a stroke
in other words, other words
suffered a month before or more,
other words becoming other words,
he was always an explorer
of the other words of words
and how words turn into other
things and other words
in other words turn back
and leave us safe in a dance
with words in it and other words
to do the dance and other
words to watch us do and other
words to be in other words
around the edges of a word
where an eighty-two year old
man from Chicago must have
slept many a time in other words
and all the words came out right
and he couldn't speak until
the edge in other words became
the middle of this word and he slept.

8 December 2004

=====

How much of it was just speaking
or the rafters of the house
I looked in

just before dream I saw
the drop lights of the carpenters
making garish shadows in big space

what are they doing
deep in the shell of my house
work brothers invisible

busy with their hands
breaking space together
to tell me what? I slept to investigate.

9 December 2004

=====
As close to Shakespeare as it comes
the wood beneath our feet
resounds also to Shylock's rages,
Prospero's inexplicit magic spells
(what does he really say to Ariel?).

The wood. The stage. The sore,
ill-Darwin'd feet, our poor toes
crammed in damp shoes
move us into our stated places
blocked out by the demented dramaturge.

The comedy is always beginning,
the words rise effortless, even teeth
(talk about bad design! the Lord
should have worked an eighth day
and a ninth before resting, get
the teeth right, prostate, mammary)

even teeth can't keep the words in,
the play runs on and takes us with it,
that is the gravamen, masters and men
locked in psycho-sexo-passional flow.
Flux. Flood. All the cosmoses we own
own us. The tiger snarls on cue,

the snake bites, the priest roars
in his pulpit, the oak tree keeps
its amber leaves all through the winter.
No way out. But also no way in.

9 December 2004

Later I quietly chalk a strange tall bottle

for Jackson Mac Low, 1922-2004

in which a black liquid has long been aging
a juice that poured out of Pandora's box
when first she opened. Now the clear glass
passed black juice so that chalk would show.
The rational prevails. Nobody will die today.
But I am tired of writing on bottles quietly,
I lust for the squeak of glass, reek of grass,
clang of brass, I want the bottle to smash
and gush all over my cousin's table,
I want to lap it up noisily, till all the poison
turns to Bach fugues and Fred Astaire movies
inside me. No one will die today. In Latvia
they gave me a drink of a black liqueur,
we call this Elik sir she said, and played
Bartok for me on the piano, more fugues.
more romance, operas, frescoes, candles,
Hanukah parties, toothaches, windowshades.
No one is left to die again today.

9 December 2004

TURN

for Zachary Kitnick

as if a key
had found that curious hole
we drill in doors
to keep them safe, a shaft
to reach metal through,
reach and turn.

Door, as if a hologram of Yehoshuah
stood outside a door with no knob
and did not knock.

Spoke
instead in a slow voice quickly
a language only wood can understand:

On you I rested, on you I supped,
on you I climbed, on you I died –
we know each other's secrets,

you and I. Madera. Materia.
Wood. The mother-stuff.
Now let me in.

9 December 2004

THE RAID ON THE REAL

squeal siren, churr
of stolen car
 – for no man owns
his proper vehicle –
gunshots from the Hegelian night –

we're hot for history again,
we want a flag
made of human skin,
we want a north wind
made out of the dictionary,
blow the mall down.

There is a Santa Claus
only if he is a saint, a bodhisattva
from Lapland rife with emanations.

Otherwise the weasel in the hedge
writing editorials on violence
bites your leg the better to
describe the taste of blood:
copper, sunrise, tin.

Call this group Salt Story
and book them for the club,
hysteron proteron,
God made us to make God.

9 December 2004

=====
The bound form, the phoneme
like a star, unimaginable
except in its sky.

Imagine it.

The word
after she says it,
when it has no more sound,
just a space or hollow in you

where it heard.

Where hearing was.

It is the end of the end.

The over.

All meaning and nothing meant.

When you do it to skin it makes scar.

10 December 2004

=====

A day off. Obligation
to do everything.

Today I find the blue
inside the yellow
rose or roses.

Today I merchandise the air
and advertise the weather.

Sex is propaganda.
A hundred feet of wet fence.
Neighbors.

THE SLOVENIAN CLOAK

Be sure to nice me
a cloak as for a manpire
welcome outside the house whose
little pot of peat is smoldering
to warm the morning, nothing else

except such elves or fairies may attend
to feel some need for vegetable warmth
as if they were pirates of our weather
and brought our journeys to their destinations.

Almost, almost. I could smell
the burning turf, the rain walking
up the valley, I could sense
the commandeering ways
of spiritual beings on all sides of us,

no square yard void of their presence,
the bare rock of Muckish flank,
no sheep, farewell to Ulster.

But it's December in the new world now,
deep in the Banishment, this Penal Colony
of puritans and poison ivy, ancient
bride, my pretty 'Merica.

What have you done while I slept?
Why isn't this Devon and a king,
Donegal and dirty monks sing poetry
in the three-hundred sixty meters of ecstasy,

why is it now?

10 December 2004

=====

Every few years
I wonder why we do it, make this place
– so beautiful as places go –
into such a mean country.
Try to make me be another place,
blue druid or black priest
and then I'll pretend to understand
and tell the truth.
Right now I'm scared
and looking for beast comfort,
some tit in the wilderness,
some shadow with a mouth.

10 December 2004