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WATERTOWER PLACE

What would it have thought of
caught with another atrium
another Ann plummeting
down my lost unknown

when is a friend not yet
or some other cigarette dispensed
smoked discarded
smoldered out

how long my torture was
the childhood how can they
do the bitter sin of sending
me to school where nothing was

not speech and not silence
and all the bastard signs of each
a boy weeps into his sandwich
the cheese on seeded hard roll

soft cool crumb around slivers
of yellow cheese a boy
weeps and a silent girl
plummets through the air

I creep to her broken body
and breathe my life along her throat
I am a stupid little boy
and she is dead, a stupid little boy

brown-fingered waiting for glory
waiting for a window to fill
with more than light and more than
air and she can't breathe anymore

I pray to a blue statue her soft
face the snake beneath her feet
there has to be something in the heart
that knows what feeling's for

if this is where the beautiful
body of the beloved goes, if this is all
the body knows, this cold silence
and blood snaking on the tile

I think I would die for you
but you died first, I fall for you again,
your blue coat, the sky you left behind,
I try to walk it off, the swelling

you leave inside me, I fail you again
and every street is one more gallery
in the long museum of the night
full of the shoddy beauty won by loss.

15 January 2003

THE CAVE OF THE NYMPHS

Roll up the stone, roll
away the stone the fish swims out

the fish lingers in the stream
like a word quivering on a banner in the wind

what does he say
the sea cave, the article of genesis

our karma, our bill of sale,
the economic order where we're born

this bird-like thing flies under water till
it finds the you it needs to be

sheep or shepherd
spilled from the same dream

2.

all the things you
all the other

things you understand
move in a thickly world

a thingly world
by autobahn or cruciform

basilica or municipal piscine
shut up I was a zygote too

I know the lies they laid
to make me come true

to make me come out and be
someone in the long commotion

everything has always existed
beginningless stone

fallen from the prom queen's tiara
we have to make authentic

now with our own powers
ruby it takes time and pressure

or even diamond but
that needs purity of life as well

3.
from which we dip a lucid stone
to drink *only with thine eyes*

a new language every afternoon
until I find one that makes sense

even when I use it,
that arcane unlikely terrible Sudanese.

4.

Are you sure it was the stone
to roll away? I think it was no stone,

or one of those soft stones
that pour through our fingers in the night

or those great white kites of salted cod
drying on the morning racks

the imaginary Iceland on which we feed,
pagans like Jews are born and not made

how can I be a convert heathen
yet I try god knows I try

pouring out my milky sacrifice
on random thighs and forest stones

while he laughs up his *Sleeve*
the actual cosmic name and nature of our galaxy.

O he has other swathes of loomy cloth
other garnets lost in other mansions

and all we hear is that strange laughter

seabirds, gannet's giggle,

we think it's the birds cackling
but it is the sea itself

o turn off the music god I can't hear your son
at the first of his last suppers just

across from me the shadows on his face
I try to hear, but the sound stops my hands,

the intolerable music of the father
drowns out the son, what wisdom there might be

is lost in a howling sea of instances,
no wonder birds laugh and the cave

is full of honey, all those trillion
trillion instances the only word there is?

5.

all Gnostic me
and mean

sounds like territory
blues factory

hone my honey
string

string miracle
a pouch of dew

a meaning
made of pauses

I practice singing to the deaf
you contradict myself

ovens where my wheat is scorched
hawthorn hedges

freedom
is the other side of what you hear

every conversation
is a foreign country

unknown victuals in a weird café,
a plucked flute

so long ago,
its pattern inlaid on the trembling air.

6.
to gain access
restore contact
penetrate the air
our nearest enemy

*he detesteth the very Air that stands between him and his Mistresse tho' stands is wrong
to say, in that Air is subtle, ever moving, quick to slip its cold hand between his loved
one's ardor & his own*

we dress this way
because despair

pick up the white telephone
talk into the wet mouthpiece

all of a sudden
you are the one who counts

the world is listening
say the name you really mean.

16 January 2003

Two Theologies

1.

god is what happens in my head
how could I not revere
or live all day to be in truth with that

what can I know
truer than what I know with
that which knows me
inside out and through which
I know anything I know

the knowing and the known and the knower are one

this is not solipsism
this is the meek exalted certainty of experience
the everyday apocalypse.

2.

Of course idolatry is the great sin
sin = mistake

idol = a god over there
that is, one postulated, not experienced.

God is experienced, an idol is discussed.

And when I experience that highest intensity
I call out.

The word god means: what is cried out.

And then there is a sin called idolatry.

16 January 2003

LEMON

a very
thin slice of lemon
so you can read through it:
place this on fresh writing
and press firmly till
the writing is transferred in acid
and the lemon slice is ready
to print your text on someone's skin

this is transfer / transmit / receive / kabbalah
these are the marks of sickness
spoken of in *Leviticus* that morbid book I love it

this is dream

a dream is a calque of what happened

a dream is a cry of trapped things

I mean precisely this, doctor:
the dream-you-remember
is the only dream you have
though who knows how many
you may have been having or have had

the dream-you-remember
is the thin slice of lemon
you can almost see through

that prints the dreamstuff on your time

what's left of it,

you dream all day.

I know this is true because I dreamed it.

I saw the lemon.

I saw the words come through.

I saw the smudge it left on paper later I could almost read.

After a while I understood

and told you as I always do

trusting you

to know the yellow the sweet tart

meaning the cool rough skin the round

fresh rind the sensuous evidence the word leaves behind.

a lemon. I'm too busy to establish a world.

17 January 2003

WHAT TO TELL THE DOCTOR

Clumsy people eating the sun
rising something like that
blur of lyric intentions
a poisonous canoe
under the weir white water
as of Christopher Alexander's Pattern
Language philosophy I can't quite get
how the beautiful paganism of an I-full
nature and thingly things full of I-ness
or soul really motivates the particular

buildings he designs or arrays of them
a school a town his things just feel
like different things his own taste his
neo-Victorian eye he mistakes for
the language of the human soul
an excusable mistake since he is he
and you are you and so forth but
give me a break the only soul
he knows or could know alone as he is
is his own soul his juicy abstraction
this elementary confusion is so benign
that lets his work or any work happen
in the first place but also limits it
to cultish eccentricity the elder Saarinen.

so the first question you should ask
your patient to sketch his Ideal House
spend a lot of time on it make it true
to all the lusts and liberties he ever
thought to find a place for a comfort

a place to be unconscious in or wake
suddenly this very morning knowing
something knowing how many rooms
there are in it and which way it stands
to answer the sun path or the wind
or Orion overhead on winter nights
and does it look on other houses
who lives in them and are there trees
silos highways seacoasts factories
doesn't anybody want to live by me
then show the picture to the doctor
or would you rather walk naked
through small European cities than
display the savage truth of what you want?

17 January 2003

AGE

The older you get
the more likely
to believe everything

you go back
to every religion
every superstition
makes sense to you

even science
has some meaning
after all its arrogance

because everything
is instances
and you are the whole

they all are part of you
in fact they are you
and you know it

you are nothing much
but them
you know each other
at last

intimate sunset
every distinction
a revelation

every perception
a face
every face
the face of god.

17 January 2003

EMPTY CUP

Traumreste

have I used everything up yet?
that would really be sunrise

and the day would really begin
because no life can start

until the dream is done
and the dream lasts as long as desire

what we are and what we want
nothing but scraps of dream

left over, stuck in our breath
patterning the way we move

awakening might be seeing
what's there after desire

stops making me look so hard.

17 January 2003

A MOUNTAIN OF PURE GOLD FOR DAVID HUME

so it drifts on by
and you know it
while you can
a whiff a feel
then a shadow gone

I waited always
under the overpass
any bridge
sneeze a lot
to chase afreets

nothing more offensive
to spirits than our breath
since they have none,
our endless suck of nitrogen
through which they disdainful stir
mapping their own desires
on us and over us

for every creature supposes itself
to be in charge of what his senses show
and makes his little world the World
and sleeps in it

in Weys Crossing
in deep mud
by the recycle bin
I heard a blue jay saying

a Christian place
takes old shirts

a bird says
how it feels

that things have seams
and separate or come
together

count
on him to pierce
the obvious
with song

the mud is frozen
the car goes

a window is a silhouette of light
dawn now
dog's dinner of remembering
It All Comes Back

I accept your silence
for what it is
not a smug word
meanly meant
but no word
no Valentine

we train our dog to laugh
so he can keep us
company as we watch
but under the bridge
over the Rondout
it's hard not to be impressed
so high above our heads
cars thunder going fast

Jupiter Tonans in the night
south to Port Ewen
funeral parlor the first pines

in your mazy garden
your wise son waits
playing a game

we are the pieces.

18 January 2003