

1-2003

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## AN OLD ROMAN KNIFE

When it is said that the universe is alive  
one thing among others that is meant is this:  
if you follow any object far enough and long away  
any percept it will lead you soon enough  
to a living sentient being. The oldest piece  
of Latin is a maker's name on a bronze blade  
and then it says "he made me." Even  
the metal tells. The rock on my shabby lawn  
killed Abel. Everything is near.

18 January 2003

## ALWAYS ONE TO TAKE RISKS



Ordinary ceremonies begin anew  
water sports and spirit guides  
a motorboat round Ogden's Point  
carrying noisy white clothes

their music happens to the water  
mingling not unpleasantly with our séance  
the ghost of Jean Seberg stands before me now  
speaking the fluent heavy accented French  
she made the national patois of love

for love is earnest breathing mostly  
with death on her lips, she tells us all  
we've come to learn,  
the curious customs of beyond the tomb:

Don't think money ever stops  
I have some now, isn't it pretty, paper and gold,  
and eating, we go on eating  
but gain and lose no weight,  
it's all sensation without consequence,

I love you, but language  
is so hard for us, everybody  
has an accent now

she says,

and when we were children the nuns said  
death doesn't make you an angel  
not even stainless babies are,  
since angels are different but the nun  
couldn't say what that means

but she was wrong, I tell you that straight,  
we are angels, we always were,  
and still we fall in and out of love  
it is like weather, rapture boredom no escape  
the only thing we have no hell to fear now  
everything is just what we make happen

because everything has an accent now  
and none of what I tell you really feels like me  
only if you find me beautiful a link is made  
along which information passes

and all we are is information  
but why can't I learn anything from you?

18 January 2003

## MIRACLES

Every specific recounted miracle of Christ is anagogy,  
mark of an equally specific transformation or mutation  
that the 'Christian' strives to learn, ponder, enact,  
turn into experience.

These miracles are the real  
parables. Not the words but the deeds. Not the story  
even but something you have to do.

18 January 2003

## **BROKEN WORD**

A broken word  
like vow or  
oath or really  
promise is the  
ugliest of all

what right does now have  
to shape the future  
except by living to it day by day?

A promise  
is idolatry

is false philosophy  
a lie even with the best intentions

a star fallen from heaven  
giving a shiver of light as it falls

then nothing at all.

18 January 2003

## CANTEEN

In those days I was so hungry  
I'd eat the hands off a watch  
I'd suck your name right out of your mouth

but I would not drink from that canteen

metal tepid contoured flask war surplus khaki canvas snug

but in Toffenetti's off Times Square  
they served ice water in pastel art deco pitchers set  
free on every table and

waitresses moved around me with the sound of ice clinking in a glass.

18 January 2003

*DREAM TEXT, early 19 January 2003*

**This is for the mouth and the shadow  
the book and the orange**

this is what heard me  
out of sleep.

19.1.03



## FOR VANEIGEM

The wild Belgian who doesn't believe in God  
believes in the devil:  
the one who runs the Spectacle,

the intelligence of greed, the telos of money.  
Somewhere back of Vaneigem is the noble savage  
spoiled by something —  
and for centuries we've trolled to find how that something  
affects the world, becomes  
society, prison house, slays our pleasures

but never know what that something is.  
Conspiracy of kings and popes and banks and bosses —  
the most successful conspiracy  
is the one least aware of its own existence,  
unindicted unconscious co-conspirators

but does the conspiracy run itself,  
another world against the world

or are we strangers and that conspiracy is just the world?  
There is a river flowing through all things  
waters all our roots and if we drink at all we drink from it.

Are we outsiders, is pleasure  
the last vestige of the starry knowledge  
we fell down from  
into the work world? And who is on *our* side  
except the yattering artistes  
who shut up the minute they too  
coopted are half-generously moistened by the flow.

So where did we go wrong?  
Is there a way to turn it off?

And who would I be  
on the other side of the spectacle  
and how would I find you there  
lost as we are in the crowd of each other?

19 January 2003

## NOCTURNE

I have something late to say  
a midnight mistake I love you  
again I am made of weather  
and change and change but like weather  
I always come to you  
and will never leave you alone.

\*

I translated all the books of the Bible  
into skin: the good books  
Exodus Leviticus Ezekiel Qoheleth  
so you would feel me

\*

you would grasp my interpretations  
gaily at the tip of your feelings  
because we know where love is stored  
the little knob that opes the door.

19 January 2003

*DREAM TEXT, early 20 January 2003*

I like the part of the story  
where the world comes to an end  
and what comes next

something waiting  
that washes its face

and smiles from the mirror  
your father knew me  
before you were born  
I am a friend of presidents and kings  
I am clean  
as a chessboard  
and you know me now

you want everything  
to be a person  
so you can talk with them

you want the future  
to send you a letter  
close as rain

I told your father  
he would have a child  
like you, he groaned  
with yearning and apprehension  
and knew

the trouble with you  
you want the sky to love you.

20 January 2003

Issuant de rêve  
je mis ma main

20 1 03

**cave**

**take**

**care**

20 1 03

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One bird waking

blue

everything

something

to give to you.

20 January 2003



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I write Coptic  
in the snow

showing off  
like sunrise

now  
something

unbearably  
old beginning.

20 January 2003

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The juicy sophistries  
of the middle class  
disguised as clothes

the poor  
speak other languages

I see the sun rise and wonder  
Have I done my work for the day already?

20 January 2003

## COLD SPELL

Be still  
and sympathize.

Rabbit somewhere  
out there shivering

in the snow, a girl  
with a sore throat

remarkable  
saying things

observe  
where she sits down

there, that  
is the place.

20 January 2003

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Next time

agree

we all had mothers

nothing else is sure

we fight

against the light

20 | 03

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a scratch on the table  
shaped like a bird in flight

my hand  
wipes them both away

a shadow of no light.

## THE OLD ONES

survivals of palaeo-human  
intelligence — language they have  
                                    but not words,  
                            do you understand?  
under the hedges  
sometimes waiting

or you see them in subway tunnels  
cuttings, under stone bridges still  
when butter-yellow coltsfoot leafless  
breaks out in spring

Christ sometimes they hide inside your clothes.

20 January 2003