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PHAGE EROTOTOME

Something has to have been lost
the swim of beavers
too many tourists
shagging in the woods we
need a lump of coal
to polish and study
eerie pictures of what's going on
in all the world, world
they won't let us know
so we have to see it for ourselves,
coal or jet from Whitby or
this TV subdued by alien gauss
what's really going on,
screaming, seeing the truth
by looking close
at something else,
the geese are passing
sometimes you see the wind
just swinging in the trees
and sinners on the rue Rambuteau
up the block from art
hurrying to shop,
pietons in their piety
pedestrian purchasers
around the corner from the world
and over central cities
rockets fall, mall, milk, mercury,
blood, palm leaves, nothing at all.

18 March 2003

FEAST OF ST.JOSEPH

Spell waves of accident.
Sow curious wheat? Incurrible
amateurs at our white work
but our shade is blue —
so much for poetry – and the guide
usually joins us from below
(her haunches in the diner, his biceps
nursing beer). Trillium for spring.
Stuff comes up. Today
Saint Joseph is even older,
still carrying the child into Egypt,
mourning his son and wife in heaven
while he's still earth. He is part earth,
feast of all our giuseppes, but flowers
this year have not risen at our wish,
we must owe back rent to the mother part,
she's tired of waiting, tired of war,
I imagine Joseph's beautiful
forearms sinewing tough-ankled blue
flowers from the ground, wouldn't that
be ecstasy and opera, darling Italian,
wouldn't that be spring?

19 March 2003

PENETRATING EQUINOX

When the Romans feasted till the sun
posed on the horizon like a naked god
oily with light, rapt in self-exposure
before a camera kind of world

and they sang their puzzling springtime hymns
so simple for so complex a people
and then they jumped
three times over furrows in the ground

and with a golden spoon scooped up
a little dirt and tasted it
held it on tongue tip to find out by listening
what word the earth would make them say.

19 March 2003

HAVING

Having room for it and putting it in room

Having time for it and putting it in time

Having love for it and putting it in love

Having heart for it and putting it in heart

Having pity for it and putting it in pity

Having a word for it and putting it in a word

Having thought for it and putting it in thought

Having room for it and putting it in time

Having time for it and putting it in love

Having love for it and putting it in pity

Having pity for it and putting it in heart

Having heart for it and putting it in a word

Having a word for it and putting it in you.

20 March 2003

MIXED KARMA

After a while you get to be a
planet with its problems,
lepers and earthquakes and newspapers,
you wake up and they're there
and already they're you,
you dream about them for millions of years
before during and after the civilized phases,
some people and animals, if there's a difference
on your planet, on your planet
they pray to you, but most of them just think
you're the ground beneath their feet.
You were like that once, before
the long epochs of Personal Development
led to a planetary incarnation and you have
no hands any more so what do you do?

One by one you have to dream things
into their consciousness, your people, your beasts,
your élèves, all the life that lives on you,
otherwise you dream the long
hard instructive dream of stone
the quick Irish courage of running water,
you dream things into the air, you dream
faces into open fire, you dream plasma flares,
you dream the shadows, the shallow light
of other people's moons onto your deserts.

And who do you pray to, alone in the sky?
All your onetime wives glitter around you,

your husbands and mothers, lost in their duties
through the night, stars, planets, asteroids and you.
You dream your selfish hopes into the open hearts
of sleeping creatures and behold, the hope
turns glad and measureless and empathy and sweet,
the vague impressionistic innocent hypothalamus
of your animals charge with strange impulses,
decencies, desires, repentances, and you
trap them inside your atmosphere. Never
will you stop telling them the dreams you mean
and never tell the same dream twice.

It makes sense to be alive. Everything
your people do spills out of the dreams
you give them, how confusing and terrible
for you to watch all the things you make them do,
the wounds and kisses, their appalling certainties
when all the while you're just trying to make
some peace and beauty in your corner of the sky.

20 March 2003

ON THE THIRD MORNING OF THE WAR

does a day say?

And what kind of thing decides?

A disk is so many directions

like a blue word

spoken in the dark

behind the field house or behind itself

where so many others are waiting

to adjust the circumstances

or be serene, like a knife,

like heavy traffic slowing through fog.

Heavy fog this morning

after day of rain

it must be spring

with the sun coming

midpoint of annual slippage

sit in the north

facing south

if you would rule large kingdoms

“I’ll give you anything you want”

the voice whispered, or was it

he tried to remember “everything?”

Mules are animals

and men make war,

he detects some truculence

growing in his attitude

an angry pacifist

ready to kill for peace.

But then the man sitting on the fence explained
he'd been dozing and woke to find
his long shadow stretched out east before him
and a little man crouching over it
lifting the shadow carefully from the grass
and rolling it up, his head already
was rolled, and now the shoulders
but he flexed and shrugged and shouted hoy or hay
and the little old man let the shadow slip
and disappeared, leaving the man's head to unfurl
slowly. And sure enough the man and his shadow
were a couple again, and when he shook
his shoulders the shadow copied him
and all was well. What need
to be angry? Where is the war?

21 March 2003

VARIATIONS

[My watch is stopped and inside this house my grandmother waits for me to give her something she can hear. Needles. Tick tock. I carry her the smell of the wind and I protect the broken watch; it keeps another kind of time.]

Dear morning,

breath goes before us, calls us back, is there before we get there.

Bark is the make-up of the bare tree outside my window.

Where are the prey slain by the season? Where are the hallways of the sky?

In my sleep I recite the epilogue of childhood: the solitary tree

MAGIC

If magic got us into this
look to magic to get us out.
The fog is almost scattered now
but Louis' head will not go back
on his finicky body, I still mourn
the oldest ruins, blue buses
full of Latvian Jews, broken
chairs, Golgotha, Babi Yar.

It is from equinox
that power's born,
Bach's birthday and blue
flowers on the Sachsenplatz

as if we needed more than
music, do we
even need music? Shadow of a crow
over naked earth, at last
the snow is melting, tell me
if you can
the measure of a man,
is it what he does or what he means
to do or who he wants or how
far he goes along a road that no one knew?
Nobody knows. There are no roads.
The seed falls
into the shadow of its tree.
I am my father at last.

21 March 2003

CHANNELING

Save your mercy for the miracle
the stuff you have to use all day
—kitchen range, limestone, subway tokens—
is only some dismembered sign
the ghosts left behind after the séance
annoyed because you used the holding
hands part of the ritual as excuse
to let the sweat of Sarah's nervous palm
negotiate the channels of your palmistry
until your lines were running with her
and you were sopped in girl effluvium
while the disembodied spirits were
justifiably irritated at your tactless
obsession with the current flesh, rope
in the house of a hanged man, say no more.
And so they said no more of Spiritstan
where it is April all year long
and lilacs infiltrate your allergies
and even hummingbirds move sedately
in a biteless world. They repeated no more
truths from Samas the Carthaginian
their guide to elevated afterlives,
so you'll just have to wait till next time
if even then to learn who killed the Pope
and why the common daisy has exactly
seventeen white dew rays round a matte
yellow fluffy mesa, count them
and blame your fingers if I'm wrong.

22 March 2003

TOO MANY NUMBERS

to deceive you with
the orchestra plays faster
wedging tone
needle into artery
to download
a condition you think
is you. You have been counted.
Spring always outside
no one waits.

23 March 2003

ARROGANT SON

stands under a morning

not mine sometimes

yours the decisions

are endless are cetera

you made him

in your body

all the wrong instruments

rafters of a house

hates pregnancy.

23 March 2003

HEDGE

without adjective

gorse keeps them out

who don't read

thing messages

sealed letters from the emir

hide under leaves

huddle skeptical

lunar literate

everything kills.

23 March 2003

DON'T TRUST SILENCE

it is stale it waited too long

nightingales are books

unwinding in the trees

autotorah recitation

loentropy uncorking

the last bottle of you.

23 March 2003

MAKING SUNS

fall clouds speak hands

senses glimmer

between letters unsend

forget my last address

nobody biology

count the teeth and tell

who this meat was.

23 March 2003

SO LEFT

many me alone

roadside shadowvvendor

so beautiful this warm cup

empty of everything but itself

I loved you I held

it in my hand.

23 March 2003

SCRAPE AWAY NIGHT

no snow to brown
to green maybe
everywhere on line
before anybody
knows it it knows.
Morninging.

23 March 2003

TRY TO THINK

of this as if
and then the next
also in line
thinglessly
on your mind
a dream of taxes.

23 March 2003

MILKING TROUBLE

from the forge pour light

into form beat

till something holds

edge and wait

imperatives of art

to happen

now takes a long time.

23 March 2003