

4-2003

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## CONFESSION

Something's missing. The apple  
on the branch casts no shadow on the grass.  
What becomes of me?

Has my shadow already been measured  
rolled up, cut off at the root, the foot,  
where a solid body touches liquid earth,  
sold to some wordy Fairy  
who writes an epic on this dark parchment  
that was me, writing the way they do  
in silver ink.

How flat a shadow is,  
but without it there's no substance to a man,  
and what kinds of stories do the Fairies tell?

At least let my shadow keep them entertained,  
let them roll me up again and portage me to bed  
and read me till they fall, do Fairies sleep,  
do they wake up wanting prunes, Carib cruises?

Sometimes in strong sunlight I think I see  
my old shadow come back to me again  
and I can read on his pelt some stories of their winter  
when they write and dream without exactly sleeping  
and write things down I read in what is left of me  
but never do I find an ending for their story,

or for mine, their stories are all middle,  
so plot and resolution are what ruin stories,  
as if each one of us had just one and only one  
and when it's over there's nothing left of us.

4 April 2003

## **IF IF**

If if is wonder if if  
is alone if is  
a merchant sailor can  
your isles muchacha  
interpenetrate  
bricklayer's archipelago  
some steps in mud  
if if a Carolina wren  
suppose we took  
their names away  
would they be us  
or them again?

2.

remove from ambience  
the names of kings  
no more Georgia no more July

3.

if if wanted to  
travel up your aisles  
scented by ambushes  
of perfume ladies with their little spritzers  
struggled past apocalypse  
to reach the blossoming escalator  
here try this one is  
if in heaven?

4.

much as an ache  
answers the querent  
does it have a shoulder  
does it knee? so if  
if answers the apparency  
of a brick world  
geography of grief

5.

waiting to blow away sorrow  
a hint of pleasure  
satyr play between your tragedies  
I am the face of Socrates  
suddenly between your knees

6.

if if if  
or if and only  
if what ambush  
denominate 'the real'  
snared if's ankle  
into certainty?  
bondage of the actual?

7.

if flees by night  
through the aisles of the department store

everything belongs to if  
like a river to a crocodile

if travels many miles each night  
if is the wild dogs

the owners let loose when the store is closed  
if if flees from the shadow of ifself

that lurch behind if and around if  
in a blizzard or barking only if can hear

8.

if it said bondage  
but if if read birdcage  
if motions if their way  
through someone  
to be activated no  
slain into security

if if is something  
in other words  
if is a lover too

loving ifself in

idolatry of otherness?

here let if's other

let the cage bird

sing sideways

always and always if.

5 April 2003

## SAMBATYON

I find myself sitting by the shore  
of a river that keeps the Sabbath.

It is the Sabbath  
and the river does not walk  
the river does not put on its shoes.

I cannot see it, the river  
does not turn on the light,  
no hint of movement either, and a river  
is all movement.

But the river is here, the river is still  
the river loves its children maybe and smiles at me.  
And I hear it, singing a little  
in a dry special for the Sabbath voice,  
making sure everybody understands everything.  
A river also gets a day off  
and not just to go to the synagogue, no,  
the river stays home all day.

What do you do all day long?  
—I keep the Sabbath.  
If G-d can rest, a river can stand still,  
but not impersonate a lake,  
heaven forbid such an act of dissembling.



So on this day the river is invisible,  
faintly audible, like the radio two houses away,  
but it is thinkable, this river is, very good to think about,

and I could tell you its name too, only I'm not sure  
you're allowed to name things on the Sabbath  
at least out loud, this quiet river  
the runs through forest clearings  
past neat little bungalows built of logs  
each with a yellow dog in front of it  
like a lion sleeping in the sun.

5 April 2003

## WHITE

Under the enamel  
of April snow  
something might still  
be waiting

but this earth always  
keeps coming up  
with the same old surprises  
grasses flowers

the inedible indexes  
of love, the feelings  
you go to bed alone with  
(I hate you

when you get like this  
all super-ego and no tenderness  
as if you had to keep  
a private winter

against me) (you hate me  
because I send from  
far away easy postcards,  
imaginary flowers.)

6 April 2003

## **SARS**

Immodest destiny  
American as cigars  
a plague that sounds like guitars  
newfangled death

it's not smoking  
it's breathing other people's breath  
it's having to share  
a human atmosphere

closed in their snug chambers  
the devotees of safe  
paddled masked through  
dangerous Chinatowns everywhere

I can mock them  
but not blame them  
I too would rather not  
expire from what you've got

you prancing other person  
fresh back from weird cities,  
because we know in general  
all diseases are venereal.

6 April 2003

## **OBELISK**

I've done it my way  
all these years  
and gotten here and now —

what can be more pleasant  
than to inhabit my own life  
hard as it has been

having done everything  
and everything still to be done.

6 April 2003

## **LUDDITE SOLUTIONS**

Even the Luddite  
enjoys the benefits  
of modern conveniences

Two hundred years ago  
he had to smash the machine  
now he can just turn it off

Just don't pay for pleasure  
and the dark enemy  
will break and fade away.

6 April 2003

## **READY FOR THE OTHER THING WHATEVER IT IS**

I have to take a big ad in your home-town paper  
getting you interested in the other side of this experience  
you might like better, the resale value of my caresses  
or how you will be able to think back “when you are old  
and grey and full of sleep” upon these integers of ecstasy  
we scribbled idly in the sand of the bed tonight or will  
if you consent to be the person fooled by all my honesty.

7 April 2003

## **LISTENING TO THE LOVER**

What is he after here? The tone  
changes like an engine in trouble,  
will he get to the top of the hill?  
Can it make it all the way to her garage?

7 April 2003

## **DéMAND/gE**

Everything asks.

But everything always

is up to something,

you can't count on everything,

everything is too beautiful

has too many admirers —

staring out my bleak window

I'd never guess that everything has problems too.

7 April 2003



Angst

If the flower forsook the stalk  
it would last only a few hours  
maybe a day or two if some kindly exhibitionist  
set it afloat on a shallow china dish

I can't get started, can't count  
past me, envy is a bad teacher  
no one ever loves me enough to be me

or did they once? the ferry  
so in love with the ferry-slip it forsakes the sea?

7 April 2003

## THE THREE LITTLE PIGS

is a very scary  
story especially  
if there's only one  
of me, one  
little pig  
in a wolf world

and I wonder  
reading the bible  
how bricks are made  
of fire and clay and straw

and the breath of wolves  
those alchemists  
puffing on the fire  
that bakes the bricks  
I scheme to use  
to keep out  
the winter of wolves

but maybe I can take  
the fear away by reading  
the story as I read the bible,  
backwards, so that the pigs  
are unclean citizens  
and the wolf is the Law  
the breath of spirit  
will never stop coming

trying to change them  
by breath alone  
into children of the light

and all these years I struggled  
to keep spirit out  
the little wolf  
breathing at my door.

7 April 2003

=====

Something let it happen, dawn  
and it's supposed to snow  
but who supposes.

7 April 2003

## ODE TO GARCIA LORCA

so many of you are dead now,  
the lovely maricons you scorned  
float corpse-white around you  
butterflying through the afterlife

all they ever wanted was  
the grace of difference  
the grace of being light  
in a heavy world, the grace of floating  
cheating flirting being  
irresponsible, almost the grace  
of not being at all,

I love these faggots you dissed so  
famously, they tell me  
what I love so much in nature, winds, women, gods, grace,

grace,  
the feeble tracery of dead leaves  
left gothic-gnawed by caterpillars,  
the flounce, the flutter, the deep intelligence  
of trusting nothing, the suicidal merriment  
of choosing pleasure  
to rewrite the body's code of behavior,  
to open every door,

can you forgive them now  
who die so frail,

because they sell love  
you detested them,  
but what else is worth buying,  
because they are puppets of desire  
and have no austerity, no olive trees in their nature,  
only cheap things, childish simulations  
of some preposterous Hellenic love  
that shimmers on the borders of the mind

but they were skin,  
mostly they were skin and wine and cigarettes and drugs  
and lurid diseases.  
they were crime and attitude and insincere,  
and in their insincerity a great chivalry  
traveled almost for the last  
time through the forest of the world,

naked knights, no horses but one another,  
making do with who they are,  
carrying their battered beautiful bodies —

their wounds are their only weapons,  
ready to rescue everything they met  
from the monstrous crime of giving no pleasure.

7 April 2003

I'm sorry it's taken me so long to get back to you about this. And even sorrier that we won't be able to come to Lithuania this year for the Vilnius Poetry Autumn. It just hasn't worked out, in terms of other commitments. So please accept my deep thanks for your invitation, and my real feeling of closeness with what's going on there. I do hope that some other year I'll be able to attend. Or at least visit a land that's close to my thought, thanks to the dark splendor of your forest mages (I think of O.Milosz and that great Baltic family), your poetry (I think of Vyt's translations), and the dear Mekas brothers I have known for so many years. Curiously, as I write, I'm listening to a masterpiece by Ponchielli almost unknown in this country, a massive and magnificent opera called I Lituani, based on the story of the Lithuanian freedom fighters against the Teutonic knights that Mieckiewicz tells. Again, thank you for all.

## DEMANDE

The demande in you will drive you to  
a woman's knowledge of woman.

You want to know a woman  
the way a man knows them — knowledge  
is power.

To taste (even)  
the authority of a woman,  
the vast certainty of their knowing.

Do you know how much a woman knows?  
(How can a woman know how much a woman knows?)

Always susceptible to 'authority',  
you would find intensely but quietly compelling  
the presence, aura and *promise* of an authoritative woman,  
one sure of her work, of her power.

A powerful woman:  
you have power, you *are* power,  
your own power.  
You love or would love  
your own power reflected back at you  
from a powerful man or a powerful woman,  
it's the power speaks.

You love that power, a power that seeds a new growth  
of authority and energy in you.

You can be like fire; fire takes everything to yourself



and fire gives yourself completely to what you take.

Further: beneath the open secret of a woman and her father  
(that whole ancient opera), there is (it seems to me)  
the deeper secret of the woman and her (m)other.  
You want your m(other) in your arms.

9 April 2003