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NORMS

Go quick from looking young to looking older,
that is the way. Leave out the middle of your life,
the time when you act your age. What does it mean,
anything? When sixty-five percent of all Americans
are overweight, what is weight? What is the norm
if everybody is abnormal. The majority is always wrong,

poets always knew that, Paulus, come out and be ye
separate. The majority is wrong, they voted for Tilden,
voted for Gore. And where did all these fascists come from
who were liberals under Clinton? How does a whole
innocent god-fearing government bureaucracy
turn into the Gestapo overnight, millions of men?
Because it doesn't mean anything, people think
what they are told to think. We're no different.
We don't know anything. We protect our little pools
of phony information and invalid inferences
as if God handed them over on Sinai. We argue
in bars. We demonstrate. We vote.

23 April 2003

OLD MOVIE

I've got to do better than
this with the day.
And the day,
be good to me.
«difficile à être heureux»
she says, slumped picturesquely
on the ground her desperate
lover doesn't know what to do,
she is glamorous as a far-off
mountain range soft on the sky,
he can barely touch her,
she is so holy, so distant,
touches her, it is so
hard to be happy, she says,
everything is different from remember,
it touches you, the ground
lies beneath and touches you
hard, every way it can, is that enough,
of course not, dear fool,
you need another just like you
to tell you how wonderful you are
and man created God and God
created woman and no one takes
responsibility, least of all
for their desires. His desires.
And the old lover says for the first
time in my life I am afraid.

23 April 2003

ARS LONGA

1.

The poet (I keep saying this)
is someone with nothing to say.

And nothing
takes a long time.

2.

To empty the usual

acceptations: sounds
to change
the range.

3.

Just this side of forever
the form shimmers
in front of you hasten
over the ice towards the actual

body of emptiness.

4.

Words erode
yield soil
fertile plain

outwash,
alluvial
from your pain
the page
in sunlight
spoken.

24 April 2003

SILENT JOURNEYS THROUGH THE WALL STREET DISTRICT

And all these streets are mine
huge narrow glass
buildings opening like roses
from a bud of number

I count the window till I'm dizzu
with geometry
and still the sky is far beyond
the countable profusion of the actual,

of course all these offices inside
are empty, names on the doors
and fancy logos smart as mon

but nobody there, it's all surfaces,
3-D same size replicas
of skyscrapers full of busy business

but here's it's all empty, no one
works here, no one buys, no one sells,
only me ambling along in love

with who knows what or whom or why
trying to sell you on my sense of things
in all this empty beauty over my head,

the buildings are about themselves, like poetry.

24 April 2003

THE ROCK

A natural boulder
carved all over with words.
Your name again and again.
A sail. A liaison. A bed
in summer but the sheets are cool,
blue satin, you come home a little drunk,
sprawl naked on the sheets,
I slap your ass, you curse me and we fuck.
How simple it seems.
Try not to remember. The pink
on blue. The tenderness, the truth.
The battered owl we rescued from the woods
until the roads lost us,
there were too many Californias.
I go out in the morning and there is no rock,
just a little stone with no names on it.
It must have been me,
I am inscribed with you still.
And that is pretty simple too,
a sail stiff in the wind far off, a little
boat rowing towards me
always already the huge sea
closer than seagulls' cries.

24 April 2003

CALL

I'm just in the middle of
something give me your
number I'll call you right back

you always are
what's her name
I'll never hear from you again

25 April 2003

TO REFORM THE STAGE

The theater went wrong early,
there are only two people ever,
language is wasted on other people

and the subtle interpersonal meshes
woven by playwrights
are pure bravura, ornate, rococo

embellishment of the real source, la souche,
basis of all, you are wounding me
when I love you or

all the other cases of our grammar,
only you and only me
and what we do together,

a play is a great two-ity
wrapped across fierce time
our only enemy outside

who has no lines to speak
makes us say them
just the two of us

powerful to bless or hurt
infinitely. The world's
a stage the rabbi said

between sips of sherry
and the Queen laughed,
the world is you and me.

25 April 2003

ACCURATE

as it is, a charm
against disorder is disorder.
It proposes to smooth the peaks
in the graph of what happens.
Great sinner who wants to be happy,
only your wanting stands in the way of what you want.

25 April 2003

DETERMINATION or

ways of being free

radical chicory

coffee makers

mark Tristan's

pale face up to the

music lover's tiff

any chance lasts

supper's over head

bowed and left

at the corner grocer

Spicer dead much too young.

26 April 2003

KEEP THE PRESSURE up

subdue the moon

how much I wanted

yours that miracle

in my sky

not the shape

especially but

even on the 26th day

through all the wet

of cloud and rain the

light she gave,

the outrage, the behave.

26 April 2003

ADIPOSE miracle so soft so shapely
the lesson to be learned:
staying soft and feeling everything yet keeping
elegant contour always.

26 April 2003

TIMELESS MIRACLE skin on an old man's back
can't tell by feel from a young girl's.

Lesson: the back is poorly innervated, the back skin
feels little in this life, it is virgin in compare
to face, sole of foot, arm, palm of hand, knee.

26 April 2003

PSALM

Hold together
a stick and a stone
tap one with the other
the sound you hear
is what the sky says.

26 April 2003

DAY ONE IX

So the tiger
so the day of him
a pearl intact
inside the fire or

mordax the biter
of days the green
ocular fire
ix pronounced

like an Austrian
girl saying I,
jaguar or tiger
or what is big

and shaped of shadow
outskirts haunting
killer of maybe
and it rains.

27 April 2003

SILVER

Purchase this
with silver pieces of thirty
then hang the fruit

back in the tree
and wait another mother

She will come

Suicide on a bright morning
the world full of good-byes

Good-bye means God be with ye
God means Go
until the road is done

the road is gone
Go means Good-bye

I bought this silver frame
to put around a picture of you
I have never taken

always only what you gave
never one looking at me
and so I break the silver

am I Judas am I Jesus

stories are so hard to understand
when you don't know which character you are

betrayed or betrayed
treachery is in the air

the robin reads it from the lawn
the worm remembers last time

another planet another good-bye

it's like trying to understand the weather
wind falls, sun smiles and you're gone.

28 April 2003

SHERPA

Infuriated by a broken Muse
he cursed the goddess

Where are labor?

Why does it hurt so much
to think?

She wouldn't answer.

He left the base camp
of his feelings, went insolent
away from people,

hurt, he hated.

Are we all like that?
Is it all just so much sunshine
coming hard down the mountain?

28 April 2003

HARMONICS

In the other room her breath
she is sleeping

A reporter born before the first world war
takes note, a nonagenarian
nobility, slightly gaga, writes it down
one word at a time:

*The subtlest idolatry is the worship of an invisible God,
when you bow down before Inapparency itself,
your idol Emptiness.*

But she is dreaming:
Sometimes I think I am
in one room my breath in another.

28 April 2003

SPARROW DRIFT

“Slateblooms” the loveliest
word I’ve heard for weeks

I want to kiss
you with your word in my moth
still part in yours

and you smile like a hacker encrypting a text

Once I knew everything
now I am only you.

28 April 2003