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RISKS

The risks we take
to be on the side of ourselves

to get the phonecall
that makes us wrong

worry even more
than silence does

a noise in the night

a crack in the teacup
softly oozing
still warm you sip

and your fingers find
warm wet wood underneath

27 May 2003

COMPRESSION

loss of baggage
don't worry

springtime
is like that

this magnet
for the mind

a lucency.

27 May 2003

NEGOTIUM PERAMBULANS IN TENEBRIS

What will it care for
if the pieces of darkness
come undone

and the face shows through,
the mother with the red lips
leaving her child

because sleep is infancy
from which we are born
in no mature condition

trembling with light.
She stumbles to the window
she is old now

old enough to be afraid,
the car is leaving,
the mother and everything

the mother is, is leaving
roar of the animal
in the sudden night,

what time is it, how
can this happen,
where is she going,

why are her lips so red?

28 May 2003

THE SOLUTION

Take this answer
as your question

and ask a stranger
lean in deeply

whispering clearly
in that frightened ear

the almost unfathomable
riddle, desire,

the body some nights
silences without solving.

28 May 2003

NOTES ON LAURA STEELE'S CEMENTON SERIES

To view
the thing

the only
one
that is you
is me

a body maps space
a body discloses
the nature of a place

cement walking
state of grace

there must have been
one face left
for all those arms

radical decapitation of the spatial images
radical decorporation of the white faces

a white face
staring at the past.

29 May 2003

POETS

Haughty failures.

Those gods of it
ablatives of attendant circumstance
the dance
of innocent pretense
around an uncaring center

hollow at the heart of sound
makes sound possible

to say and resound

as if the sky could care
about the birds who write
such endless confessions across it

they are in the declension or case of being
that means to go along with what happens

whereas in their routine splendor they suppose
they are what happens.

Failure is built into poetry. It almost always fails its magical, shamanistic, vaticinary, incantatory intention. Poetry fails intention. It doesn't win true love or easy pleasure, it doesn't unseat wicked kings and boring bishops. Failure is radical to it, and is the condition of its freedom. It can say what it likes, not because the words will never happen in the real world, but because in speaking, they have already happened, the world is already changed: but not in line with the poet's intention, only with the dynamic -- secret, sacred, terrifying -- of language itself.

30 May 2003

ASHTORETH

If I could keep quiet at your side
another chance another arrival
final saying something long as tomorrow
asleep before you reached the hips
beg for breakfast and a palomino
bath in Arizona the granite spa
spills lotion between your motives
so otherly this mild practice
go half-time and save your body
which wants to sumptuous savor
exploring new pain delete pain
some other name for sensation on the hill
worship elevators my hand cups you
delete all reference to this other person me
I call protectively by your name sunshine
- every pronoun is a vicious lie -
exhausted by federal regulation confess
how can people endure identity
when the river comes to town and leaves
I see what you're doing with your hand
do you see my broken hat my unwoven tree
my raveling timepiece so much belongs
to forgetting how can it keep hidden
in the vastness of its vault all that does
not remember me a black dog walking
your neighborhood eternally unmolested
unmolesting only a woman sneers

out of her shuttered window at the sun
and I am with her because she
showed the way down the cellar stairs
a torch below the world
and she whispered to me there
Spanish words though she is pale
I knew the kind of animal she was
she made me know it with a sound
we do not have in English a hole
in our nature she had to fill
and I understood we belong
together made of the same dirt
an old book calls clay but we know better.

31 May 2003

LAWN

A little frog England in a green Atlantic
rock garden inhabited by light

the rain came later
when you're there too

hawk on a bare tree today or
a pilgrim in sandstone desert

midnight
moonlight.

31 May 2003

UP THERE

Up the sky hole
tie her
she is someone
who comes down

not often
when she does
another rises
what we see

above is not a limit
but a distraction
from beyond
of which the light

is a kind of ploy
that tricks us
into thinking
or that here is here

whereas everything
is there.

31 May 2003

PRESENT

at last
to the absence
of ordinary senses
midnight old garage
all you smell is oil
if that,
 brown wood
of old horse stalls
 converted long ago
to our current creed,
we all are priests
of going,
 some few
know coming back,
one of these
turns to you now

now you find yourself
in those wise arms
after all
you've been through

she is here
the friend
is so simple
to be, so
complex

like you
in sanctity
of wanting “purity
of heart is to will
one thing” said
Kierkegaard

but who reads him,
it is dark
in the garage
where all our going
begins, she holds you
to the deepest
meaning you have been.

31 May 2003