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Neither here nor another
a place north of elsewhere
with a small air
 but quick
sometimes
 like a rill of it
where other world would torrent

or a bishop beating his breakfast
or a coddled child easily ennui'd

from the very start I missed the mark
did not bring my sister into my world
for I was desperate and another

now this nescience feels to choke
and prison me with punishments, i.e., results
of that evasion, by disdainning her
betraying all
 so that no matter
every word is a confession.

9 August 2003

PHILATELIST

Why only pictures of the dead on postage stamps?

Is language dying? Is the mail
something that happens to the dead?

Leave them to the architraves of public schools.

I want the faces of the living to read me,
smile or frown, kiss my ambitious envelopes.

9 August 2003

THE FATHER

Cry of a child down the road a peacock's cry
or why is it natural to make another,
am I not me enough? Lines of your palm
no children and a thousand doors.

And on my palm I see one child marked plain
someone already in the world
I have to travel up and down to find.
asking every girl I meet Are you my son?

That's what everybody's really looking for,
the pre-existent consequence, effect
before the cause, the virgin's son,
the daughter of the unicorn.

9 August 2003

NOSTALGIE

The margins of the skull
the school beginning with charcoal
marks meet the wall
monks live in a blue time
near the zeppelin hanger
or chalk, you can always use chalk

it wants to come home
glacial melt-off in such hot weather
anxiety silenced the herald
his words too much for his voice
just let water keep dripping from his gloves
woolen sodden fingertips
they'll get the idea

someone is born
time is such a brutal silence
trying to change glory
by the numbers
ratcheting sly waves
erosion among human swimmers
when the ice is gone to way to bring it back
salt among the vast array of voyages

10 August 2003

THE COMING RACE

will hurry to inhabit
lupines mid February
inverse mountains

the new virility
casts all in lust
walking to meet the oracle

no smoke from the shaman's cave
all his fire's inside her now
she knows I'm coming

somehow brings me
from my native customs to
these tropics of the mind

where I'll call
and they know how to understand
awake when all the rest is sleeping.

10 August 2003

MELVILLE

Among the certainties, bamboo
or where are you
in the cabin under Greylock
dreaming your fish

letting wet things fall on you
to understand the sea

so many years?

Tooth on the writing table
we have to understand our things
given to us by speckled destiny
everything is weather.

11 August 2003

LIEBESLIED

But asking for it is a string quartet
when you wanted simple
lips close to your ear
humming a song
you were supposed to remember
from some tipsy last time
that never happened
and you didn't anyway
because you were just born
in her world that
minute from an island
nobody could have predicted
marshes and mangroves
along the hard sea.
Do lips hum? You don't think so,
you don't care, you want
the occasion, let meaning
take care of itself, all
that matters is what happens.

11 August 2003

Little achievements

a raindrop

on my knee

a lost kingdom in Luristan.

11 August 2003

how small can something be and still make sense

erode the obvious leaves nothing

erode the superfluous leaves less

everything is always too much

every word is a risk, and two is worse

and with a short sentence the whole planet heard its doom

11 August 2003

TECHNOLOGY IS MORALITY

Nothing here but what is here,
the conspiracy reaches my knees.
If you want to sail to China
first carve the wind.

11 August 2003

CASTAWAY

The long sleep that left him somewhere else
lifted its sails and was gone. This quiet beach
of trees and gardens roads and rain did not seem strange.

Could he have been here before? It did not taste
like yesterday but every leaf seemed of his family.
Maybe he was the other one now, the other
man inside him he always hoped or feared he was,

the one who was with him all the time
and saw everything he saw but with strange eyes.
After all these years they'd changed places in the night.

12 August 2003

HARVEST

Old Lammas today
feast of betrayals
so much captured
from her fields

so many hostages
from the green world
we pay for later
later with our red sleep.

12 August 2003

red sleep a kenning for death

Almost ever a breeze
a lot of waiting
on this deck
but the ship, the ship
goes and the salt
stays?

12 August 2003

CAUSES

Morgan in white
arriving in trees,
sun roughed her skin

or was it having a child,
the substance of it
comes from the mother

the father a little
but it's adopted
even so, to be on earth

draws from someone
substance is finite
it is not measured

it pours from her
into the child
I never had

I wanted it all for me.
Or do I mean for you?
Selfishness

has so many hands.

12 August 2003

ADOPTION

Born from the body of the Law
an adopted child is Mitra's child,
love and contract mingled
old god, old agreements,
the love that moved
whirling precise words
through our unclear desires.

12 August 2003

ASKING

I keep asking but the animal
has own ideas

morning sun evening shade
sums it up and why
should there be question?

Isn't asking the first disease?
Isn't every question an aggression?

This hurts, that doesn't,
I'm right-handed and hungry
and still waiting.
But does handedness happen in animals or
is it one more of our peculiar mistakes?

13 August 2003

LADY OF DELPHINIUMS

Lady of Delphiniums
in every neighborhood
you were my novena

I watched your house
I memorized your door
I stalked your shadow

the flowers grew, your father
shaped the hedges you
moved through not looking

you had no time for flowers
you left them for the likes
of me to understand

I've gotten as far as their names
now you came home
later and later I can't tell

one rose from another black
flowers angry flowers night
clenches its fists in the leaves.

13 August 2003

[DREAM]

How shall I play this scene?

Shall I give them what they want,

which is the method of hell

or shall I follow the angels' method

and give them what they need?

7:44 am 14 August 2003

ARDOR

Banish ardor —
ardor leaves ash.

But ash and fat
make soap,
two kinds of dirt
make clean.

Let emotion heal the other.

Chemistry is radical to writing —
do it by elements, states of matter,
catalysts,
 not alchemy
 but the extraordinary ordinary
of what this does to that.

Poetry is the science of result,
so let ardor?
Let the swell
of feelings
all that lipid
mingle with lye

— the same in any language —

and clean the table

on which, later

you might set
an empty plate
to contemplate

or put a radish on it
to be red
and formal

no splash of virgin's blood
no wine?

"I love you for the ash you leave
the mild ceremony of your silence

the things you tell me later
hold me happy till the next"

as when the mowers come
to break the morning

or a hawk falls
on a red bird feeding —

no, no birds. No morning.

14 August 2003

KEW

Now the smell of cut grass
makes me think of Kew Gardens
interesting outside as in

the walk from the station to it
polite hordes of floral tourists
mooching past iron-railinged row houses

to the prison of flowers
where we all
are trapped in light.

14 August 2003

That's just memory,
what good is that?

To know then
with now's mind,

that's pleasure.

14 August 2003