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GUILTY ABOUT GOOD THINGS TOO

Guilt of so long a gather
taxi cabs and touch a stranger
moving small countries into war
a board-game a disease
and playing ouija with Moran
but all the time thinking Judy.

Not playing. Trying
through all that horseplay
to hear a voice. Trying
through all the flesh
to touch a person.

How sad it is to be anyone.

19 August 2003

REBIRTH

The horror of reincarnation
not to recognize your mother
when she walks through the door.
She'd be 13 now, and my father
the same age, a month younger,
the mind stream waits
to tell me something,
treat all my young
as if they were my parents,
I like the way, no horror
after all, that we are
born from children again.

19 August 2003

ASPERITIES

Asperities, certainties, a sonnet
by Mallarmé, construct rock gardens
around long-lasting scarlet of the sage,
not shamed to fold a linden lead
inside an envelope the latter
marked with her name the former yours.
This land is zoned for farming, one
loops a belt of light around it, breathes
deep and exhales as soil does, flowers
around the edges of negotiation,
wine congested basements safe from sun,
that nude rock on which a herald clammers
to announce an mortal visitation
purple plums, freigher shipwrecked, sea gulls dive.

19 August 2003

ADRIATIC CUSTOMS

Somewhere there's a pen of gold
a silver swan, a masquerade
from one equinox to the other
hides everything but my eyes,
my bones keep secret.

With masks the old
Venetians insisted on a true
recognition of each other
by essences alone.

Faces are hiding places
but the eyes can't hide.

*They are the outside
of the soul said Maddalena
and the soul is a fruit
that has no insides.*

19 August 2003

The lamp cannot illumine
its own base.
The eye can see everything
but itself.
God is a mirror.

19 August 2003

Listening to the farrier
you'd think he made the horse.
In a way he did —
habit makes reality.
What else breaks
when you break a habit?

20 August 2003

PSYCHOPHYSICS

Is there a *measure* of self-hurt a society demands? If millions give up smoking, do thousands have to take up self-mutilation, piercing, tattooing, cutting? Do we never have a choice of war or peace but only war or plague? What if after all we live in a chemical world, and certain reactions are standard, certain frictions mandatory? What if we live in secret fire?

20 VIII 03

PERMISSIONS (THE KINGDOM)

All the things I knew so well
have eaten from my hand
and gone

They celebrate
apart from me
a liberty

I can almost
imagine,
to be known
without a knower,

to be true
out there
whatever silences
infest me

It all happens
in the body
the land of the senses
whose borders
are absolute
yet transparent,

what yoga could compare
with living live inside someone else's body

suddenly
a breathless hour

back to the wall
you've never felt before

and what godly emptying
this is: imaging
them imaging you

imagining them walking
up the staircase in your spine

suddenly seeing from your eyes

Over my city stands an immense green woman
who says specifically Come inhabit me

That is our sign, our instruction
the New World begins
when we sail into that harbor
sail into someone
and climb her stairs
our country is what we see from her eyes

Invaders, we become the other.
Be arbitrary,
if you see somebody you like, become them.
Live through their means.

“why don't you come
up and be me sometime?”

20 August 2003

THE SACRED CONTOUR

allows variation,
it's just the moon
after all, just a diner
not in Japan

a shape or pattern
somebody left behind,
leaves could do it
or an old car
solo in the parking lot
a dog or something
asleep in its shade

the way I wake
remembering the shape
the substance
wants to join
the visual impression

touch this place
it is called
Making Things Up

in the eleventh hour
Christ emptied hell.

21 August 2003

TELL

Everything
has something to tell.
Knock on its door
let it out.

*

TELL ~ LET

tel is a hill
in the Holy Land
knock on its door
and see who lives under,
under Moslem under Jew
under Dagon and Moloch
under anything you know,

let them out
and listen to what's new

*

And you ask me
why I so love doors!

My whole life
is knocking on them,
fiddling with the knob.
pressing my ear
against the wood

to speak the secret
each thing hides.

And sometimes I sneak in,
sometimes I make myself at home,
lord of the villa of the meagerest leaf,
everything speaks.

*

Doors? Two reasons.
To let something out.
To let me in.
Or two reasons.
To let you in.
To let me out.

21 August 2003

CREDENCES

Too many things to believe in —
rock or stone
free or liberty
the choice of heaven never easy
it always advertises
under some other name
the label on your collar
the nipple on your chest

22 August 2003

MONKS

I love monks
the one
who deliberately live
while the rest of us
happen along.

22 VIII 03

CLOUDSCAPE?

What eye makes
of what is given,
a chateau built
of weather alone
where the mind hides
safe a minute or two
from its enemy
the dragon Unthink

22 August 2003

CURRICULUM

Catch her by the toe
just to let her go.
Learn counterpoint and harmony
to keep silence.

Anybody can shut up.
It takes so much care
to keep silence.
The best silence.

22 August 2003

PUDOR

I sell in little books of verse
sagesse
Freud thought but scrupled
to write down, so obvious.

22 VIII 03

DYSLEXIA

Misspellings

have led us all

to bed, the wrong

bed so many

times, names

especially so hard

to get right.

22 VIII 03

EPIC

I want to write your body into my chant
the part of the story where the hero goes mad
raving in the empty cathedral, tortured
by a spill of colored light along a column's curve
while crowds of hooded inquistitors
in torchlight howl their rosaries outside.

22 August 2003

Let you be the outcome of my arms
and forsake no moment for the next.
Just this, just this. Because a touch
like spider's silk weaves endless
light and glistening and hard to see
and it remembers you in me.

The secret fascinations of your voice
are hidden in your clothes, do I guess
myself some wind to listen to you there,
undress you into the word we share?

Let my mouth whispering along your hip
be something you did to yourself when young
I inherit now, color by color, a touch
the world owes you, a word from a mouth in the sky.

22 August 2003