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MORNING PRAYER

Right morphs into left and you dream
then stop. When you dream
a direction, it means a jewel.
North say where the topaz goes.
Hold it in your hand as if you knew.

Go by feel, I always have, and look
where I am, a blind man in a pulpit
praising God loud as balsam
in the autumn woods not yet
I am oak. I still have room
for doubt — that's you,

my othermorph, my thingaleavio, my ought.
A special kind of flesh she brings
to judge the world with
balanced justly on the rain,
the light quivers as she passes,
classic Provençal, a word
called out from the café terrace,
summoning strange trees. She
is bringing food but I think
I smell her hands.

1 September 2003

STIMULUS TIME

Being ready to be gone.

Earth barrier.

Port of Pain.

Ships sailing
map presence
on the abstract
movement.

Wave. Be
there for me,
pirate.

Yield
your haunches
to the alarmed
piano, the
sudden sense
that music makes

somehow your
fingers are workmen
in that black
factory

struggling
to find the natural

silence
hidden in each
thought
after the frenzy
of thinking it
subsides

and the ship

floats calm
now on the other
hand of the moon
rises I notice
only for you.

Otherwise the whole
sea is black
with scribbles,
did I write it,
or night did it
or God did
or some lover
sending frantic mail?

Halfway
out of my mind
I made a left turn
down a quiet
corridor
where shadows
were waiting
for me,

you were one
among them,
shadow
with such light eyes,

part of my house
I'd never seen
before have to
share with you now

something moving
something still.

1 September 2003

FROM THE TAMIL

This boy
is her girl friend.

Enough
with all our fancy
differences,

enough. This
really is
that,

the love they make
works
both sides of the street

sundark shadelight she.

1 September 2003

THE CONSPIRACY OF SLEEP

Noreen in the cantina
was sure all the other diners
were spying on her

and I was sure they were
each one of them an agent
of a measureless conspiracy,

Each agent is asleep,
floundering, doesn't recognize
his co-conspirators, keeps
looking, judging, turning
the world into the ordinary
place it is, isn't it?

They were all against her
and I agreed, all
against her but they didn't know it,
she knew it,

 she was one
of those who wakes
from time to time and sees
them all around her, the suspects
of the dream, the spies
from midnight in the brightest
day, she sees we're all asleep,
fingers listless on the wheel,
car hurtling ahead.

The machine goes on machining
and she screamed in her soft voice
then felt soothed by my agreement.

They are against us. And we too
are not what we suppose.

She nodded, she had all evening
been sure that I was not the real
me, not the one she'd known
in Christmases past, what I was
was just one more resembler

but she spoke to me
tenderly for the sake of the likeness.
And because there was nobody else.

2 September 2003

MARGIN IS MEANING

The edge of anything is where the taste begins
is strongest, truest
to its difference

At the margin the difference begins
the difference that heals the distance
all the weary while you've come
from the last situation you understood
when someone said Touch me and you did.

And now the sky is flying by,
it too wants to reach the edge of the world
where something else begins

But you have fooled the sky
tricked heaven once again,
the thing beyond the world
you keep hidden in your pocket.

2 September 2003

DARKEST MORNING

But who hangs a photometer on a tree
to set a number to the day's light?

I want to wait to see
so much kindly rain
green light of mildew here and here
glistening the corners

√mel- *miel*, mellitus, mead
all cognates of that word
the honey left in English

3 September 2003

PANDORA'S BOX

why do I hear
the book's feet
shuffling down the dry passage

but such bright
blood, arterial, spreads open,
book suddenly love's lap.

3 September 2003

TAKEN MEASURES

Lift a stone
to gauge the rain

three inches yesterday
and the day before

halfway to heaven
you say only half a prayer

don't joke about the kindness of the Gods,
the mind that minds you while you sleep

from one situation to the next,
the bribes of love

always ready in your purse
in case you wake.

3 September 2003

ENVOI

Tell her for me
the clock is off the tower

and the moon has fallen
one more time
for her own reflection

so drowned her light
and the sun for grief is hiding

clouds shield earth from tragedy
old shepherd mourning for his goat.

And the tower itself
for all its height
is stretched along the ground —
did she hear it fall?

how can we explain
the bricks and stones and playing cards
the clock hands big as pikes

cracked bells and dented trumpets
spilled along the gleaming mud of morning?

how can you tell your little son
what you have done?

3 September 2003

THE AFTERTHOUGHT

How can you explain to your conscience
that the most important person in your life
is one for whom you are not even a person,
just an object, a factory of milk, a smile?

3 September 2003

TWO LANDSCAPES

1.

Always something waiting there.

Tear the page out

and the book falls apart.

We are stuck with the whole text,
goldfinches pecking thistle seed.

2.

Last thing before sleeping

the shadow of a wolf

your hands make on the wall

bite the light off

and sleep happens like a cry of pain.

3 September 2003

What is the name of the seed
no bird will eat
no plant will grow
but the furthest stars are
embodied by,
oil of fire, spill of sense, shout in the night?

3 September 2003

TIME CODE

They called them gods
when they and we were young
and now we say the stone, the sea, the sun.

Deity also (even) is a phase,
a road stop in a long night,
we don't know what follows it,

whether such nights ever end.
But we love the highway,
the blue gold California of it,

I lick the glistening wet road.

3 September 2003

ORIGIN

Bird seed again? The cry
from the middle of heaven,
Or is it sunshine through clouds today
for the first time? Time
is a fortress under siege. Are we weather?

That's where all the rain comes from—
what we don't know about ourselves.
Origin. Blue stone at the top of the sky.

4 September 2003

“EXAGGERATE” THE “OBVIOUS”

Some words I like too much,
or not so much like as *hear them to begin*.

Heap up what is *right there on the path* in front of you
you can't get by.

Whatever is *there*
is like a dream you wake from
but can't get rid of,
its *dramatis personae* trail
behind you through the day, sometimes
darting ahead so that the Korean
girl ahead of you on line is the one
who ninety years ago read all those books
and came to make love to your best friend
whoever that turns out to be

and all morning you've fretted about
what that could possibly mean,
Prague, lesbians, cave lined with tapestries,
are you even still alive?

Caught between dream and downtown
what can a man do? Get a haircut.
Visit the interior of the mall — by distilling
the obvious all round you, you will find the hidden stone.
Listen close while she snips your sideburns,
with a blade so close, who needs a flower?

Who needs forever?
Whisper by whisper
you hear your hair fall
as if someone very far away
with a little piece of silk
was polishing a stone.

4 September 2003

RELIABILITY

I am not organized that way.

I am hollow but not bamboo.

When you build your house on me
you're like those Irish voyagers

who landed on a snoozing whale one night
and slept sound on what they thought an island.

But morning is a swimming time and gone.

4 September 2003

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