

11-2003

**novD2003**

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## **THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN**

A priest is walking along a path. It is autumn. Ahead of him, in the dirt and leaves, are a few tiny glittering things. He kneels down and picks up what looks like a diamond, small but pretty. He sees more of these glittering things, and carefully picks them up one by one till he can find no more. He blows on them, to discharge the dust and leaf debris. It is not clear to him whether they are diamonds or glass or something else, but he takes care of them, he puts them in his pocket. This is called Trusting the Moment. The kingdom of heaven is like that.

15 November 2003

[dreamt into waking]

[natural eyes, 5]

The small taste of any given thing, the rapture, the bronze penny in your dead man's mouth that turns out to be just one more word you speak, and you're alive after all, blood pressure soaring but alive, and there are medicines, and you are full of ideas about free radicals and Africa, but the taste in your mouth doesn't soon go away. You are Africa, it turns out, your heart has turned bronze in the night, starting with Egypt, and there's no point anymore in saying you're alive or you're dead, just the light shivering through the blue glass vase on the dining room table sluices the newspaper with blue light and the telephone rings. In the vase are irises, differently blue.

15 November 2003

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As if we thought  
a different thing  
able, or lumbago,  
or the bible  
spitting old stories  
in the corner  
and grouching about  
new syntax  
with short shirts  
and bellybuttons bared  
no we didn't  
ever stop thinking  
grandmother's pine tree  
father's rice pudding  
who can listen  
to the end  
to the deepest  
stories never end  
the shadows  
like cats around  
her shapeless feet  
she spills, spits,  
specifies  
she ossified  
the truth of yearning  
into stone tablets  
of the law  
how many laws

are there  
how many numbers  
do you have  
each one a law  
and then another  
no exceptions  
ever, every number  
is a thing  
you have to do  
before you can live  
old pains  
old moralities  
old hearts  
still trembling  
with girlish love  
with boyish greed  
will you listen  
to her babbling  
Hosea on  
Ezekiel, Amos  
on Genesis  
always some love  
affair the day denies  
and the night hides  
forever in jabber  
these words of hers  
the desert winds  
all night round  
my house did blow  
cardboard boxes  
world a warehouse

of void commodities  
it makes me so sad  
to hear her say that  
I who came  
grandmotherless  
into the clay  
the city they say  
we live in  
and the hours speak  
in voices of birds  
all day the heat  
rises till at noon  
the man is born  
full grown everything  
dead around him  
except the bible  
scaring him awake  
landless laws  
touch the sinew  
of his thigh  
he falls  
one more time  
until he makes sense  
of all the telephones  
the e-mail the magazine  
somebody must be  
trying to tell him  
something, who  
could it possibly be  
the bible hisses at him  
from the corner

nobody talking to nobody  
forever till you die  
he breaks out  
of the house of dream  
dream of a house  
and stands cold  
in the morning  
of course he's not born  
of course he always  
was, the words  
try to get him  
but the dawn wind  
sweeps them away.

15 November 2003

## STANZE

Don't have the think to time with  
don't blame her though, the red  
berries of the whatever down by the stream  
are the only colors of the morning

so soon it will be everybody's b-day  
and I know nothing the city didn't teach  
all my life remembering to get straight  
the somber lessons of the street by  
life in these fair fields but not Connecticut

isn't that free verse coming over the hill  
didn't that go out with Chesterfields?

16 November 2003



## THE PURSUIT OF LITERATURE INVOLVES THE POET IN CEASELESS HUMILIATION

Eleven lines  
just written — takes me  
a line to say  
what Catullus, say,  
could spring in one syllable,

I've known this all before  
and said it too, a line  
of Virgil is a sonnet later,  
a line of Milton  
a sprawling ode of Hart Crane,

it takes a whole life of writing  
to match the dense  
beauty of one dumb  
song from the Shih Ching  
or Western Wind.

16 November 2003

## **SEVEN YEAR OLD**

Rimbaud biting that girl in the ass:  
early evidence of how he'd treat  
the muses. And they'd get even.

He knew the words, but not the ones  
that brought him love he wanted  
or whatever peace the heart could take

and so he left off saying anything.  
Rational Frenchman silences oracle.

16 November 2003

## **POETRY**

I have grown old at a young man's game —  
Pound is more surprising than Rimbaud,  
to keep it up and keep it up  
line after line long after  
you know it changes nothing.  
That changes everything.

16 November 2003

## TELEOLOGY

How can it caught again  
you worry? Becalm rat mind  
and spool the jenny free from the mast,  
a boat knows where to go —  
it's only you with your jittery tiller  
and your Bach fugues who's always running  
wrongwind into dithering storms.  
Death is so frequent it's confusing  
any one of us is still alive or that your Last  
Occasion is not meaningfully recalled  
—the reaper's rapture, the surgeon's  
mauvais quart d'heure — or the blue  
parakeet's in how November weather  
could be caught in northern woods  
and giv'n a home among believers  
and a yellow colleen called Earth  
bought to bird beside him and be his friend,  
your cage is just a footnote to the world  
's identical if larger aviary  
where we fowl sing, a woman  
who was bored with money,  
a solipsist with a feeble sense of self,  
you meet all kinds in the final Rapture,  
reader, those empty shoes beside you  
might just as well be yours,  
o Tannenbaum o Hanukah candles  
you'll be my liver I'll be your lights.

17 November 2003

## MIDDLE NIGHT GRAMMAR

Grammar is the lost of it. I try.  
I try to beak the circle open and seed  
spill but the spoken never speaks.  
Long wide the avenue runs in rain  
cold past the Greyhound depot  
with not a hint of noun to warm  
my poor bone in, I spin in place  
until I see back east a light  
resolves film-wise into Burger King  
where I am warm and eating,  
the act's authentic though the food  
is pretty frivolous, not bad as such,  
bad is not the order of Our World yet  
just wait if you think chicken nuggets suck  
see what the Martian comrades have in store for us.

This is about grammar, not history.  
This is about now. Language always keeps  
spilling into now, warm coat, some slop  
I spilled on my lapel, my history  
strewn about my house, o god the names,  
the names now, and grammar most of all  
because all the operations and relations  
it supervises are right now in this hard-hat  
hour, worksite where deictic I-beams  
point to thee or me, there is no other.

Wait while I spool the thread of this discourse  
and pat you gently on the northern flank  
you've hoisted quietly to lie beneath my hand  
while you tell me how you like this well  
but still won't go with me to the boring priest  
you'll wait up to let me in when I come back  
later this endless night even though he was the one  
and he bored me too who told you in the first place  
how I love Vietnamese vindaloo and you  
went and made a huge pot of it for me before  
I even came, first thing you did was show me  
how it bubbled in a huge galvanized iron pot  
weird wonderful to smell and a big hunk  
of salmon simmered pink inside the dream,  
it's strange to be in Cleveland anyway  
though I figured out with some precision  
here where we linger on your daybed we  
are 350 miles away from somewhere else  
but where? And how did you know I was me  
anyhow when I wandered in off the street,  
anybody could have come through that green door,  
grammar is like that, grammar is the sleep  
of actual things and how they think themselves,  
and think they move around and touch and tell.

You keep kissing me light as a bird pecks,  
I guess you're telling me you like me,  
but what am I like? If grammar is a dream,  
is silence waking? Is that what's in store for us  
when the sun comes back on, one more tomorrow  
full of other people? Come with me to my hour,

I'll bore you worse than any priest but I will be  
your bore at least. And yes, I like your kisses  
but no, they are not comprehensive explanations.  
I need more. I need your gerund,  
you need my participle. No more smiles.  
We have come to the heart of the sentence.

17 November 2003

## TEA

what tea am I drinking  
what is this, the color  
that a liquid  
should be so dry  
a green insinuation  
between the morning  
and me, an agreement  
that I will call you  
later, will call you  
always, a green  
intimation of an always,  
a thin tea, a green  
bowl to drink it from,  
all right, a contract  
even, a marriage.

17 November 2003



## **OPEN THE DOOR**

Open the door, the door  
always has a lot on its mind  
often says interesting things

furthermore you can see the horizon  
through it when it's open  
the horizon is the other cheek of the door

you have to slap that too  
before the sky gets over its distances  
and comes in, yes, comes in

your very house and sits down,  
the sky at your table drinking tea  
with sugar-free jam to go with it

cherry, just like in Mirsuvia,  
and your backyard unaccountably  
fills up with noisy geese

you wonder what you should talk about  
and why you invited the sky to come in  
or did you invite it

is it all just part of a world-wide  
conspiracy of doors  
and here you are

waiting for the sky to say something  
did you have a hard journey you ask  
o no the sky says I live right close

just over your house  
and you too are just somebody  
who came through a door one fine day

you have to admit the sky is right  
conversation gets easier  
when you think about what one another mean

and the door keeps chattering away.

18 November 2003

## **BUT WHAT IS LEFT OF A WORD?**

Don't marry a jaguar.

Those opaque eyes will take you in

forever, take you in

and leave you nowhere,

zinc mirrors deep inside

swallow a man, metal

in the heart, they have no heart

their heart is their eyes.

19 November 2003

## VISITORS

When you crack the stone  
there are things that live inside  
and they come out.  
They come to you.

But whether they were living in there  
before you broke the rock  
or were they born in the breaking  
no one can be sure.

And where they go now equally uncertain.

19 November 2003

## **EL DESDICHADO**

Am I really a number in your book  
or does the pine tree keep track of all its needles

do you notice when I sob alone past midnight  
in middle-class bathrooms, it's a class thing you know,

can you feel me in the suitcase of your heart  
struggling to keep you company on your vacation

or just to get out of there and be forgotten  
I have my own rendezvous with oblivion

I don't need yours, we all break eggs,  
when I was a child I had a blue bridge

from my neighborhood down the road to the sea  
and only now it seems strange very strange

to need a bridge to reach the ocean.

20 November 2003

## **FEELINGS**

The way she feels  
is not about you.

The way I feel  
is not about her.

The way someone feels  
is about someone  
not someone else.

It is not a message  
it is a condition  
like a disease or an address  
for some real estate.

It is where it only is  
and you pass by.

Sometimes you sit on the porch  
if there's no dog to chase you away.

20 November 2003

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I know more than I tell you  
and less than I say.  
Watch out for people like me.

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