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STRING

What are they doing?

Who's asking?

I don't know what they're doing.

Do they?

I don't know, do you?

I think they're doing what we're doing.

But without a flower, without a string?

Some people can.

Oh, people!

Well, we're like that too.

We, we don't even know what they're doing.

It's cold here.

Because it's morning still.

Does everything have to come in pairs?

What do you mean?

Cold, morning...

Or flower, string? I see, no, I don't. Maybe we just talk that way.

We talk too much.

You mean I do.

Maybe I do.

I wish I knew what they're doing over there.

How would it help you to know?

Us.

All right, help us.

The first time I met her, she showed me something I can't forget.

What was it?

It wasn't what she showed me, but the way she did.

How, what way?

I can't talk about it, but I keep remembering it.

Why bring it up now?

They're doing something over there.

People usually are.

I ...

I know what you think about people.

No, I ...

Yes, you do. I know it. That's why you can't tell.

Tell what?

How she did whatever she did...

She didn't do anything, she just...

or what they're doing over there.

What are they doing over there?

You see?

No, I don't see.

I mean you don't like people, that's why you don't know what they're doing.

Do you?

Or what she did.

She didn't do anything, it was just the way she...

I know, I know.

What *are* they doing over there?

I'm not sure if I'd tell you if I knew.

5 March 2002

[Commentary: String is the first thing that pops into mind. Absurd but palpable, you feel the soft of it in your fingers, continuity, tangle, opportunity to connect, tickle, lead, trail, discard. Irrelevant, slightly funny, pointless like anything else. Broken or whole, a string is always interesting. But the first thing that comes to mind is also itself. String is also everything that string is, or does, or says. Harp string, sutra, thread of connection, section, string me along, pearl after pearl, see one see them all, string is the thing that puts the et in et cetera, the pearls hold, or when the string breaks the girl's necklace becomes a cosmological event as he pounces on her, Tarquin or whoever, in the old Italian painting, pounces on her from heaven or from habit, the pearls leap free but the painter sees, freezes them, caught forever, pale spheres of falling.]

Perfect flair
driveth out fear
wild people
wield little
islands

play baseball
with a quill pen
worry about
pleasing women

old before my time
I saw an owl
fly over the highway
heading west

the shape of hurry
a sky
we meekly share.

5 March 2002

march towards the beginning
the meaning of anything
is punctuation

I have been reading
the side of the sky
where the small print hides
they don't want you to see

blue on blue
I learned from breakfast cereal
how to read through food
now light has no secrets anymore

I know the maker's name
the toll-free number of the absolute

5 March 2002

le numéro vert de l'absolu

some word lost in telling

openwork slipper her shadow
on the tablecloth a country
ripe for the taking invasion
silver epergne full of yellow apples

how far was anything from here
salt from the sea how rough
silk really is compared to skin

the mockers wait by the rail of the bridge
to slay us with accurate remarks
as we shuffle along in darkness under
on the way to the mysteries

the other has to be someone
the other in whose bower we breathe

palm trees beautiful tropic sky of suicide

5 March 2002

late

THERE ARE TWO KINDS OF WRITING

There are two kinds of writing: listening and saying.

Didn't I know that? I did and didn't say it because I didn't know I knew it. Please understand, I did not try to deceive you.

Listening is responsive — hence active, since it moves out in adjustment with what is heard;

saying is demanding, hence passive, since it measures reality by what reality brings to the saying one, the subject.

Saying says what you want, which is not very different from what you fear. In this sense too saying is always passive, since it is reactive, reacting to pre-existent states of feeling by pre-formatted programs of desire or aversion.

So listening, being responsive (= reaching forth and taking the experience as a spouse, that is, an equal, the subject and the object of equal value, equal energy), remains the active way.

Listening is activity.

Listening hears what it summons by acuity, what by listening it makes speak.

What is the case is summoned by listening.

Thus each kind of writing has active and passive ways of being or being regarded or being done. Turn and turn about.

The kind of writing I admire in myself and others is the listening kind, where writing is not very concerned to tell what's on my mind.

What's on my mind will always be all too evident, more or less available to any attentive inspector, interpreter, listener.

Never fear; what's on your mind will always get itself said. That should be the least of your worries.

Listening writing summons. It commands by listening.

Is there anybody there? is not the point.

Listening makes things happen.

Saying calls things into question.

Listening writing tends to be absolute, free.

Saying writing tends to be contingent (Do I get the thing I mean?), allocentric, bound.

Listening reveals; saying measures.

Saying writing is usually full of similes and overt comparisons, because the writer is always measuring what is said against the demand it is meant to express or materialize.

It is in listening writing that the broader wilder reaches of metonymy speak.

6 March 2002

What has he had that he's not had,
where was the stream had no water
or he wouldn't wade? He did and did
and did, and there were crows, girl shadows
and leaf shadows, soft lawns, crimson
gown, what could he have wanted
that didn't come? Why was he everything?
And why was everything? Ever since Latin
he wondered, dream, not dream, orange?
An orange peel alone can't rot, it needs
its inward fruit to decompose, there is
a relation, a relation, the shell can't change,
just dry more, go small, go hard.
What is missing from everything he has?
Why is there no time in the day for the day?

7 March 2002

ORANGES

Great men have used up all their fruit and kept the shell.

The shell is how we know them now, unchanging
icon in the history book. The juice elsewhere.

7 March 2002

CAUSE AND EFFECT

I think of the old writer sleeping alone in his fumbled bed
While dozens of dewy sophomores read themselves to sleep with his text.

7 March 2002

NOT ME TALK BE YOU BE BIRD.

Mourning Dove what kind
of wake-up Latin do you speak?
I need another language
I'm losing the sounds of what you say

listen listen I keep saying
when what I mean is I can't hear
I lose part of your sentences my dear
hear a gapped text postmodern

to the last I should be a storefront
in Chelsea ready for your latest
installation, birds in plasma,
girl of made out of iron bridges

not me, not me, I mean
I weary of this pronoun
when will he prosper
into a mere full moon

theme of just being
here without obsession?
What kind of question
is a question.

The cure lies
in the words you speak
oracle of the day
hear dream

soak the dream leaves
then distil, drink,
you all lie
you all tell the truth

now the water's full
of that strange text
taste of what the dream said
now drink your mineral

little boy, little boy
who is not me.
How could he not be?
Little me that is not me

little me that is not anyone,
in language macerated
and blue dream, indigestible
platitudes. A star

falls. Suddenly to be
unhappy with one's life
as if a hotel were overnight
under new ownership

and everything's wrong.
I let myself be distracted
and the weather changed
I should have held

flawlessly craftful a man
of pure attention.
In the ailment is solution.
Reverberate. Now concentrate

on the thing you made me do.

7 March 2002

DREAM POOR

Dream poor

the anxieties
make the body twist
its channels till the subject wakes

Analyze the opposite of *this*.

Do you begin with that
or this waking-
sleeping-waking stuff
that chokes the burner of the mind

streets paved with melancholy
landless metaphors, milky drift?

Not that and not this. Vowel-rich
the speech of animals. The shapers
of their stream are few, though,
those who talk with beasts get wet
and then they wake again,

Antarctica,

a rose.

Nothing **x** nothing = something,
divine arithmetic
works best when someone sleeps.

A body relaxes into touch.

Being touched.

It doesn't feel like much
but it's the end of time.

8 March 2002

FIVE LEGGED CONVERSATION

The disproportion (“thorn”)

connate with roses.

“I want you but you don’t want me”

limb that fits nowhere

talks to the table.

Polite refusal

to share the physical.

Space itself

a dangerous boudoir.

8 March 2002

Having lost the ability to lose ability
now by utter lack, bottom of barrel,
surcease of monkey tricks.

Mother told me there were bananas
deep inside the earthen jar
big enough for my hand to sneak in
and a whole life left to work it out.

How would you like to live
a whole life locked in metaphor?

Or have tigers chase you round and round a tree
until you turn into plain white bread?

8 March 2002

AMERICAN CERTAINTIES

empower

space.

Elm trees in Ann's back yard
and not too old.

Circles

also open, and then the vowel
lets to purr or shriek a while
uninflected by busy obstruents.

Not everything dies at first.

Ceremonies are mostly about beginning,
leave sleep to handle
(please move the candle so your face)

the shock of texture,

the shock.

Almost reptilian the way time passes
over and under people together
where talk seems not at all in words
and even bodies mute politely
but all the time something's getting said.

8 March 2002

As a man at a table is unarmed
if he does not desire anyone there,
disarmed if he does

people can't win.

Servants once were useful as constant
reminders of the essentially theatrical
character of everyday life

scene shifters

spear-bearers, they were the audience too

without them we behave for the universal
invisible camera always trained on our best
profile

we hope it's running. It's running.
We hope someone
sees the rushes o

everybody sees.

8 March 2002