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TULIPS

Daffodils, one blue-eyed flower
left of all the thousands.

Magnolia next door already shedding.

And I am home. The syllables
hold me safe in their mouths.

18 April 2002

I could live under your tongue.
And even when you spoke me
I'd still be there, hiding
in the shallows of your mouth,
the warm wet library that knows everything.

18 April 2002

HIDING

Hide a glass of water
in the ocean.

Hide a tower
in the sky.

The Tour de Saint Jacques
wrapped in scaffolding
and under the slim ironwork
a beige material
hides the shape and sign.

Hide the world
inside the material
of which it's made,
world means rolled
or wrapped, hide
the world in matter,
something is left over
it sticks out
like a smile,

hide a pilgrimage
in a city street
tending south,
hide a pilgrim

in two lovers sitting
watching wind
explore the grass,

hide hope
in a bird's wings,

hide history
in a red fox's quick
nervous passage
from shadow to shadow
to catch your eye
and hide from you
at once,

hide Jerusalem
in the palm of a hand,
it strokes another hand
it curves around
a wrist an arm
it is the messenger
at last of the lost
continent you hid
in sea mist so long
ago you forgot,

hide the east
in the west
then no one ever

will find it but the best
the simplest believers
the ones who still
believe their hands.

18 April 2002

THE FOURTEEN STATIONS OF THE CROSS

1. Examine the nation.
2. Be content with your desires.
3. There is no end to knowing, so seek to know. This goes you on forever.
4. Youth's drunken party whisky taste.
5. Ecstasy is the lukewarm version of what?
6. Know yourself till you find me.
7. Look deep inside you'll find me down in there, busy with your flesh and blood, remorselessly becoming you.
8. You are me; that is the solution.
9. Uneasy about the rising tide of anti-semitism, Yeshiva boys stand nervously at the corner of the rue des Rosiers, attended by perfunctory police.
10. Proud flesh: the body's out-thrust of self instead of healing, self as song, that keeps the hurt going.
11. Smile of a shopper in the mall; friendship of a sheikh.
12. The shallowest water swallows the moon. Try it. Seize.
13. Wait till we come back then we'll see where we are.
14. I sat in your church as if I were sitting in your skin, inside you, in comparable dark, reading the captions over the Stations of the Cross. What happened to Him. What I want to do to you. How many times he fell. When I will fall, and what sea will cover me over and drag me with its undertow out to meet what? The captions describe images, but they are not the images shown in glazed terra cotta on the church wall; the images are us, the stages, levels,

paces, places along our path to dwell inside each other a few days, a few years, liberties, lives, who knows. All I know is the feeling left.

18 April 2002

HOT DAY

The way people pass
lips a little parted
nervous hungry eyes
(eyes of people in museums)
anxious for an eyefall
to rest on
something they want
to buy or to be,
not the way an old man dying
as easy as the thing
can be done
might with composure
stare up at the moon.

18 April 2002

Who am I with?

Who do I belong?

A face becomes

a piece of the action.

The world recoils on its permissions

---this sentence, meant to mean nothing,
suddenly begins to flush with sense ----

to be small enough to get in

then big enough to fill completely

the paradigm proposed,

the brass basin from Varanasi,

your pelvis willing to think

about me, even adoring, if

and only if a better mathematics

eats away uncertainty and makes

the animal know it flourishes

at the heart of wanting. *Essor.*

Machinery of desire. Night flight

steal my dark. There are measures

that lead us back to luck alone.

18 April 2002

Is this a style we read together, force & compromise, a weather?

Something determined. You, me and the ash tree, the old one,
fraxinus, it lay down in my garden before we were born.

But the shadow is still there, forked like certain Persian swords,
tongues to say two different words. Fatal words.

So much comes between us. We have to use it as a kind of glue,
oleum absentiae, the grease of being gone from each other
that lets us come again. A Parisian garden, a statue of Montaigne
across the heavy traffic. You said this: there is a tree

that accounts for how we feel. And you said: the ones who pass
are looking for something that stays still.

...

18 April 2002

ODE TO THE SOVRAN IMAGINATION

Assembly of the first disorder right here
is there love left in the stone enough
for italic bridges spring over Hellzapoppin
formless chariot of episodic lust
drives my commune biologique
means organic means carbon means burnt
if you are my diamond to digest
the uncreated fantasy of light
fabric all around you the heathen
think is sin. Skin. A breath
snatched among rosebushes, still spring,
still all thorn and not much pash,
no color but what you bring to bleed,
innocent with midwestern aplomb.
All our samples have escaped
from the magnificent museum of the night
leaving only the two of us behind.
Pray to the devil in your mirror,
kiss her red tights, she'll do, she's you.
At least the lawnmower remembers,
the passing garbage truck all green.
The broken glass is all the ass you need.

19 April 2002

What would I have said if instead of reading
a book I wrote one? What is the propulsive
magic question that drives the man
to say it, not see it. How can I rest
in pleasure when the need is more,
a making of another other ----
not just the one I chance to read.

19 April 2002

Image then the svelte phonetic alphabet
of a newfangled pagan nation trapped
by Soviets or Methodists and taught
to turn their purrs and whispers into prose
syllable by syllable until
silence has nowhere to hide

except in sickness, shaman journeying,
wet girls hiding in rice fields, old cars.
What do they mean, these languages
which stretch moonlight into editorials?
What peculiar leaves our trees have,
we walk around and the leaves
last no longer than a breath,
we can barely see them
coming out of our mouths,
we would understand if we could
touch but we're afraid to touch.

20 April 2002

I know nothing but what the pen tells me.

Black ink is the lucidest explanation.

20 April 2002

DOUBT

Doubt is a considerable measure.

About 3½ feet long and made of platinum
very smooth. Just a little longer
than my naked arm.

I keep looking for a wise reagent
that turns all measures into blazing fire
consuming itself and everything that stands between
the heart and the house of its desire.

20 April 2002

EPITAPHION

There is no chance.

My history poisoned me.

My life killed me ----

Be careful of yours.

Vita mea me occidit

20 April 2002

WHEN HE LOOKED UP FROM READING AT BREAKFAST

Chub under showcase, lox on egg,
pepper in the milk and cool
Sunday Mass light out there and no bell at all.
But couldn't we have the bell and not the going,
the church without the god, the stonecarvings
without the stone, the stories without morals,
the morals without laws? If my mind
was to bathe in dust, why I'd be a sparrow
and have flown here, but as it is I wash in air,
dress in clouds, sentences wound and unwound
black veil of the Ka'aba, listen to the wind
wallow between the satin and the stone,
listen to the letters writhing on the cloth,
can't I have a bible without a book,
a book without a boundary, a flag
with nothing on it? Just the sun
banner of the day,
the moon hiding from her stars
on their black gonfalon
telling me the month is done
when there was so much
I meant to bring to you today.

21 April 2002

This flower grows inside the body
endless as neurons
all one color upwelling
stem into chalice into petals
spread, blood
on its endless pilgrimage to the light

it's what the outside flowers copy
flaffling so easy in common daytime
while this hard gaunt slippery tower
strikes upward through the Egypt of the dark

this hateful flower grows inside a man
never lets him rest in his own ground
always sticking out or pronging out or jazzing
out of the natural condition to some specious god
or paradise it tries to sniff out up there
a flower knows, a man thinks, the two of them

absurd adventurer swollen vessels grail.

21 April 2002

THE PERFECT WITCH

"I know more because I am willing to remember more"

Clamor among poultry, muddle,

here comes the fox.

They created cities

to save us from foxes

but I'm on his side,

the red one runs low.

Beyond the territory

is only territory, with no story.

So little resident epopeia you

and me have to make up

whatever we believe,

only through our wet tongues

can magic talk.

Lazy sailors listen with the sea

we sleep between waves

trying without waking to discern

what water tries to tell me.

Whose daughter are you,

wave of pale grain, wave

of anonymous arrival?

But the Greeks called it masculine or worse,

said it bore no harvest, could not be plowed

----two lies that spell a sort of truth----
and it was ruled by him who was earthquake
whose secret wife no one was allowed to name.
I still try to figure out how much they knew.
And what our world would have been like
if Egyptians had felt the same urge to analyze,
speculate and impose their speculations.
Rather than just knowing, smiling, and going to sleep.

22 April 2002

have come back to
you because the conversation
of steepletops is vague
and you're hard

“Then comes the region of Saintonge; from there, after crossing an arm of the sea and the Garonne River, is the region of Bordeaux, which is considered to have excellent wine and abundant fish but rustic language. The people of Saintonge are considered to have rustic speech, but that of the people of the Bordelais is regarded as even more rustic.

After that are the Landes of the Bordelais, a three-days' journey, exhausting to be sure. This is a country devoid of all good things, lacking in bread, wine, meat, fish, water and springs, sparse in towns, flat, sandy but abundant, however, in honey, millet, panic-grass and pigs. If, however, by chance you cross the Landes region in summer, take care to guard your face from the enormous insects, commonly called *guespe* (wasps) or *tavones* (horseflies), which are most abundant there...”

from an eleventh or twelfth century Pilgrim's Guide for the main roads to the shrine of Saint James in Compostela.

(the road in Bordeaux was the Rue Saint-Jacmes, now the rue Saint-James.)

