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QUINTILIS

As if the month of silence had begun
late late eleven by the dark

the magic persons of the night “their
music” Elves come in twelves. Elf in self.

There is a population
just underneath our words.

Tell me how your tongue sounds,
pronounce the rapture

where you pump the well and drink
and we are quenched.

What it means to be another
person to another person

---- this is angel work
and all day long, keep

their lovely distances intact
the soft of air upon the skin

isolate and not afraid.
To touch. The skin

is infinitely far, a caress
is messenger, not lord.

A word, not an ultimatum.
Only be afraid of explanation.

1 July 2002

EXAMINE BOTH

before our indifferent
calendar decides

then are you him again
lord of the Ahau

whatever it was, that stone,
that commencement

or have a date with
the dark dance it always means?

you are caught
inside the lattice of the thing

know what to do
know what to let fall

this is how sin talks
confess a touch

too long in telling

1 July 2002

AND

what has the white page ever told me
I didn't guess from death already
death of friends and death of trust.
Words pronounce themselves. Over and over.
Let the sounds inside the word slide loose
say soft, speak so that it sounds as if
you've said the word a million times before
and say it now, dumb, exhausted,
in someone's ear you know too well to love.
We are worn down by what we say.
Words lie. Every does. Word, thing, too
many lies too many times to tell the difference.

2 July 2002

EPITAPH

Did I ever trust anything
except what rose up
seemingly unprompted
in my head to do or want to say?

To say anything that came into my head.
That could have been my glory,
my obedience to the new.
But the new was old

and my fear was great.
Maybe the only great thing in me.
Sum up for sepulture: it's over now
again. A notetaker in oblivion.

2 July 2002

The scoria
flakes off

Too many birds

What have I fed
with my seed

Too many people
in the sky

they watch me
undecide.

2 July 2002

PEOPLE ARE LAUGHING IN THE NEXT

room people are laughing in the next room
but are they people in the sense of being
actually there with the walls around them the
windows letting the hot night in and the ceiling
sitting on their heads, or, is it just a tv conspiracy
of sound tracks I suppose, nobody laughs so much
there's nothing funny, where do they come from
and how do people learn how to laugh
and why do I sit here caring what goes down
where the pink light of television understands
nothing nothing not even me, and I am the most
easily to decode of any human creature
since I have been spouting my story since the sorry
day I was born in comparable heat, but in daylight
as if there were nothing left in the world to hide.

2 July 2002

IMAGINE THE OBVIOUS

imagine the obvious.

You have to.

There are sinners in the world

yellow cardboard boxes

coins donated for the missions

by the teller's window in the Bank of Ireland

a jar for the Leprosy Fund I put in a pound

can I do something for you now

or do you want me to come before I go?

2.

this is concrete music

the head I've worn

since I was born

around the town

until its filled

and now I spill

all I can tell is what it heard in me

3.

why is self-absorption so attractive in certain people?

Is it a certain density of being these people embody (or just represent)

unapologetic sureness of their own value

the rest of us admire that, or envy that, or want to be that?

People fall in love with certainty disguised as risk.

4.

crow caw

jagged molar

Gedächtniskirche in Berlin

Identical.

These are the bones of reality.

No sentimentality

like a pilgrimage like a desert,

fat cats who moon about absence

romanza romanza

all the salaried nomads

all the lecherous monastics

so hard to invent the obvious

means tell the truth

crow caw calls

me still

languid morning in the hottest year

lazy crow?

Air hangs heavy on the back of my hand.

People go to work as usual,

no way out of the masquerade

even though tomorrow's the Fourth of July

looking for the obvious
and never finding it.

5.

One young poet is still trying to decide what
graduate school to go to, one young
poet is walking barefoot in the woods
slowly making a way north, what have I taught
anybody about anything? Bodies at rest,
bodies in movement. Pray for rain.

6.

Now I notice a small hook
the kind you'd hang a pot of geraniums from
a small hook in the hip roof
sticking out from my house
a hook I've never seen before
in all these years of living here

an old hook
stuck out of the soffit of a red roof

and the house needs paint.

Maybe the obvious
is impossible,
a grain of essays,
a girl reading Montaigne
to pour the sun
through the slim trees
of her old forest,

I have failed at so much —
could my record
of all this failure
somehow achieve?

No word says the silence.

7.

no word says the silence
and what can we do but talk

afraid of silence
without the words
that show the shape
of what the silence hides

the actual muscle of the world
smooth beneath such skin

8.

but what if silence has no shape

and everything I've ever said
is masquerade
so I would never have to say
the terrible obvious fact below

groaning & weeping

exiles

children of Eve

9.

I want the next thing,
can't see where the next thing leads.

At the end they'll measure what I said
not what I meant,
where the arrow goes
when it leaves the optimistic bow.

10.

Now look at the thermometer
and make it your clock
to tell how much more dying
the day has in it

Don't answer the phone don't read the mail
hide in the trees and wear good shoes

untie the music from the air

and get somehow through another life
leaving the thousand volumes of my settled vagrancy

what will it be next time
a butcher in the wheat field

a stumbling rock path upward to a hill asleep

11.

how can we be born so much
and never right
so often beautiful
and worth the weight of love

worthy, worthy, the old word means you,
the piece of jade I mean to find in everyone

find the cool moonlight in the heat of the day

reach in
reach in

sarabande
sandman

winding stairs

Pulaski skyway
reeking meadows

tide flats
the whole ocean
locked in you

12.

learning how to think.

Dresden on fire.

“Perhaps someone wants to conceal the truth by speaking. But the language does not lie. Perhaps someone wants to utter the truth. But the language is truer than he is. There is no remedy against the truth of language.” Victor Klemperer, Tuesday, March 31, 1942, Dresden.

To know someone has been here before
listening
ear pressed to the wood of the door

There is no remedy against the truth of language

adore adore
what stands
between us
we both
can touch
we both can lean
upon,
 keeps us
together apart
listen
through the grain
of the door,
through it
you can infer
not far my
finally innocent hands.

13.

Floor plan

the broken house

carry

away from the tree

the bark

détaché

scoops through the air

carry the truth

away from the one who hears it

uses it

to wash

again and again his hands

compulsion,

the skin of things

ton peau miracle

14.

literature will end only when the last

remaining certainty is dispelled

then music will finally begin

--- that's what I heard just now

coming down through the sparse

snows on Parnassus, summer,

eavesdropping on the muses

where they shook out their new clothes,

as if they were inventing the air, the wind

the everything that knows how to tell,

AI MOYΣAI

loose-limbed among the permanent
where they always live
just a little behind my right ear,

where nothing
hears itself
saying,
blue song white silence
my Holy Land

a star in the middle of my meaning,

I sign my name
sentimental Israel
between the lies and certainties
a lost man loves you.

15.

The star they taught me to inscribe
is the wrong star
five rays and not six triangles

they means my father's voice
in shadow, he's speaking
from behind the mulberry
it's almost dark now, his voice
I get distracted from
watching the brown bats flirt

dementedly among the sumac trees
the lightning bugs that books call fireflies
but he is speaking
this is the man who made language
and I try to listen

all my life I've wanted language to be mine.

16.

it's not desire that's embarrassing
or the fulfilment of it
or even all the pratfalls along the way

it's the telling of it, the bearing down
of this immense invented language
to inscribe a lie you can't help telling

I can't help telling,
Μοῦσαι, the muses tell,

language, this inheritance from the living.

17.

Try
not to be ----
is that enough philosophy?

Lie to entertain
a drowsy listener
then when she falls asleep
sit up all night

tasting the bitterness of what you've said

oeuvres complètes.

I walked with you down the rue Saint-Jacques
for the first time in all these years,
you took a picture of the Panthéon
from the bus stop by the Luxembourg
camera lifted over traffic.

The clumsy foursquare pixels are visible,
hence liberate the image from plausibility

this is what a picture of the place would look like

picture of a picture.

But the Muses do not laugh ---
this is the way it's supposed to be,
say it is the scripture of a rapture,
show the shady rhymes and tricks

so at the end of every book you see
clear as desert the stone and shadow
the feel of what the book should really be

the person the book was supposed to make you be

if the tongue could ever find the mouth

the sketch of which this is the sketch.

3 July 2002

BECAUSE SOMETHING

Because something
needed waiting
wilderness a pipe
measured to the lip
firewatch a tower
reading the map
alidade the sorrow
of the undescribed
forgive

into this envelope
grandchild of a pain
blue line of unnamed stream
the strict history of water

finding its way
bent low in the car
head between knees

faint: the heat
or something like it
riding the sun

light sucks breath.

4 July 2002

LYING

Down or denial
the delta we wander

absent sea
absent limit

everything lies
did you know that

everything asserts
its false identity

it says I am
but nothing is

philosophers
have little to say

about reverie
fantasy and prayer

what is a prayer
the body silencing

all its energies towards
a talking

talking with another
who isn't there

that is the common
element, the practice

of speaking as if
and someone listened

what is a prayer
if no one listens

have darkened the moon

5 July 2002

Doesn't it make the same
sense same order anything

if the apprehending subject
taking hold of what is known

asks what is known?
what is a subject?

these also have diminished
the observation,

the holding, the asking,
the dead hawk by the barn wall.

5 July 2002

The weather's broken
who will fix it
cool the wind and dry the sky

I am tired of rebutting the world
tired of victory
the cheesy little triumphs of getting my own way

5 July 2002

5 July 2002

