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COSMOLOGICAL FRAGMENTS

The going is the coming

The sound of war delicate as seashells crunched underfoot

I need you

men make love on their way to battle

sparrow throated commentators approve on tv

But I don't approve

my hair is dirty with denial

don't you know that every play

on any stage in any language

ends with the show of war, offstage or on, roar

of squadrons, reek of blown-up bodies,

it all is about πόλεμος

mainspring of cultura.

It is naïve to think that financiers want war to make money.

Au contraire, we invented money so we could have war,

waffengeld,

we want war.

so as pacifist I find myself against the world

I make peace
like the fool that Heraclitus censures
for wishing Strife would perish from among gods and men

but I am selfish, I want peace,
because war means everybody and peace means me.

And you.

One person can do peace.
The bellicose genetics we call history
has only one emergency exit: to be me,

to be one at one with as many

as I can,
the world is there
one person at a time.

I killed hornets. I made war.
My shoulder hurts
as if I'd used a gun.
Where is the peace I meant to bring?

In the dream, someone was talking about me and said
"Poor H.!" and I understood
they condescended to my failure.
But why did they call me H? And which
of all my failures
did that unseen woman's voice intend?

2.

Cantilevered over the milk space
a furlong's thought
spins out of control, falls to earth
falls to earth
nascitur homo, a person's born
full grown. Can you prove
you were anybody a minute ago?
Everything round you is specious,
instant fossil of decayed attention,
evidence of no one's life,
certainly not yours,
you are nobody yet.
And when you are
I will call us both in question again,
moi, a nobody with a loud voice,
your bosom torturer, your nearby god.
So many voices in their cantilation
all life long blaming and assuaging
hard palm relaxed in slow caress.
For hands have voices. And conversely.

The closest we come to proof
is establishing we mean something when we speak
and what we mean, clearly delimited –

but what are the limits of thought?
Isn't the boundary of thought the presence of unthought?
Which when in turn perceived *is* thought.
So there is no boundary, and no meaning.

Come to my place and I'll show you
the opposite of thought is not unthinking
but certainty, and the borderline is proof.
But you cross it out at night, we sleep,
leaving all your words behind you,
maybe just a friend's voice saying your name.

Let winter take care of the wasps
and no more war. Is there a solution?
Passivity. But what happens
when passivity is itself the problem?
That too solve by being passive.
Recognize. Keep indolent. Control.

Indolence is innocence
sometimes in a dicey town.

Suppose the unseen world
was like the backsides normally unseen
of what we do see,
dust and rubble, shabby carpentry,
smelly old carpeting ripped up,
mouse-gnawed electric lines,
bees live in the wall? Backstage
dirty and dangerous,
full of stage magic tricks and gossip,
ghost gossip, never quiet a moment,
never quiet.

I am looking at the back wall,
my house. Needs paint. The downspout
has detached itself from the gutter,
one of the storm screens is crooked.

Not too bad, not too good.
Is this what Paracelsus had in mind
to visit the underside of things
to know the deep hegemony of time
whose only enemy is keeping your attention fixed?

It's not the anus of the world.
You'll never find that radiant eye
that rids us of dead systems
by seeing them out

out
into next space
where our lost spoiled somethings
become everything.

And she asked me, "Have you
stopped looking at your stone?"
And if I had -- -- "only staring at it
will stop you talking
and let you tell."

Is talk the diminutive of tell? (*tell-kin, a little telling)

What is my cosmology?
This rock tells.
God's DNA everywhere.
Emptiness, the prime identity.

23 July 2002

VEINS OF QUARTZ

The stone said:

At morning the woman comes out of her cave

(a stone is commentary, blue windows)

she comes down the hill to ford the little stream
and on the far side bends to drink from a pool
deeper there than on her own

“do you have
water for me in all this drought?”

Enough
to wash her face too, to drink again
nine cupped hands full.

From halfway up the slope above her
a boy is looking at her, his body
almost hidden in a cleft of the rock face.
Rock, not cliff. The differences
embed themselves in the smallest stone

that slides down the rock slope. That falls from heaven
as the earth itself did
before it learned to speak.
The earth tells everything.

Listening to a stone is not just seeing pictures in the grain
and telling them. It's not all pictures.
It's what seeing listening makes happen in your head.

The boy slips down to meet her.
Does she want him?
The angel of darkness
studies his reference books,
huge, they cover his lap and his knees,
his wings shield the text
from the morning glare.

I do not know.
The word I read is not the word I am permitted to say.
You, beside me, reading my bright lips
as I read the world, you
tell me a word,
just one word, one you've actually held
at least once in your hand.

23 July 2002

AU FUR ET A MESURE

Cure the analysis. The comely
patient drowsy on the couch
half turned on, half pissed off.

That's all we ever have to study,
quiet afternoons inside the rock,
the universal alphabet we decipher

making it up as we go along.

23 July 2002

THE FORBIDDEN page

I open to again.
it is afternoon
the rain pays no attention
I hide from the windows
and crack the book
there it is
nameless, a picture
from a world
before pictures
a world before our world
and anyone looking quickly
would see just a face

then ask me Who's that
or Was she important to you
when she was young?
she always is, she is
my story, Time
is cancelled in that book,
nameless still,
I always knew her always
could not know her name

the rain begins to listen now
and I always know her
when we meet
again and again.
But we don't meet.

23 July 2002

THEOREM

As if the world would wait
all morning for me. As if saying
a thing or two
was less important and coffee and the mail.

Who could I write to? Leo McKern is dead,
the world is full of lorikeets,
ash trees, sodomites. My great-uncle John
was a tug boat captain.

My new religion: begin everywhere.
It all clusters around anyone
and forces inward, the pounce of memory
and the thing gets said.

Is that clear enough now? Men talk
all night in bars. That is the longest epic,
fuzzy heroes of all the wrong hours,
listen to them, they explain everything

failure by failure, woman by woman
they get it wrong. The broken sword
cuts the living vine. These examples
are in fact all that I have to give.

24 July 2002

THE FACTS OF THE MATTER

Lancelot knew Gwynever
before either knew Arthur.

That is the whole sad story.
He had always known her,

and whenever she was anywhere
was likely to meet him

as she looked up from cutting roses
or consecrating battleships

he was there. He will always
be there. That is the whole

glad story. They belonged
to each other because they belonged

to the first seeing. The cart
of ill-fame, the amnesias,

her marriage, the noble distant king
they both loved; all that

came later. It is only natural
that natural lovers

come back to one another
always again. Dearest friend

each says to each,
there is no other.

24 July 2002

RESCRIPT

This is my decision, then, senators. Nothing at all. That which flourishes by itself is meadow and medlar. That which needs care is vexation and milking an old goat with six horns, I don't know how it happens, genetic isolation in Alpine hamlets. Cæsar came through and left no testimony, which is not so unusual. How many people have lived on the earth? How many have left any shard or scribble to mark their passage? Brute as butterflies they mostly go., which is not so unusual. How many people have lived on the earth? How many have left any shard or scribble to mark their passage? Brute as butterflies they mostly go.

24 July 2002

CHILDISH THINGS

A word caught in the cookie jar all night
waiting for morning, for the monkey's hand
to lift it to a strange mouth. Dissolve that sugar
in the milk light. Childish things.

Two doves in the driveway. Here I am,

I am reluctant to appear in this calligraphy,
a fly caught in engrossing ink, so I step out
now, leaving the tracery of shadowlight
to make its own way across the parchment

while all those naughty monks are downstairs
praying with brass instruments. I am other
than you thought, and am a mystery to me,
I am just anybody who comes along
and says whatever comes into her head,

I don't want to be accurate I want to be loud.
You don't think I'd actually write it down, though,
do you? It's a long mile in Flanders
on a hot day between the head it comes into
and the mouth it comes out of, and many doorways,
cellar doors and shady wells along the way.

But it's not all lies and curlicues. It's not
me and it's not you, and there is
not a single monkey in all of these trees.
But the doves were here until they flew away.

25 July 2002

THE BACK

Someone betrayed
is stabbed in the back

the back is the unprotected
the heart's real skin,
our vulnerability, lost Eden, the innocent,
the dream skin itself.

Freckles live there, moles and strange colors
of all kinds, even the smoothest back
has such scribbling

my back is what I do not know
and what I guess of it
I infer from your back

and who knows how accurate
or even how ethical
such triangulations are.

And it has to be a friend
(whoever has a friend
has no need of an enemy)
who stabs you
in the back.

You may recover from the wound
but the back is changed forever.
That little scar
from the stiletto,

agony inscribed on the skin of trust.
Do you think if we some lazy afternoon
(there is no time, we will never
have time, days are at war with time
to make more happen than the hours let)
some autumn afternoon could lie together
in the warm room I could read your back
every sign on it and could speak its meaning,
reading your map, it is the diploma
of all you ever learned and then forgot,
like any school, but the sign's still there.

Only you need a friend to read it
and will you ever again show your back to a friend?

The back is everything I do not know
about my life, the unacknowledged, undecoded,
my back is the shame of all I never figured out,

things that happened and I couldn't read them,
lost them, stored them embedded in my back,
I am stabbed in my ignorance,

only what I do not know can hurt me.

Paradox of the mirror,

it shows me only what I already know
and yet we call it looking.

Where is the glass that shows
what's written on my back.

Who is the doctor to whom I'd dare to show my back?

25 July 2002

THE BACK: COMMENTARY

A back is knowledge no one knows.

*

Hurt like a rusty hasp
on a door too long kept locked
you pry open now
it hurts all night long

*

To dream of a pain in the back
is a sign that there is mail
waiting to be read,
something you need to acknowledge
something you are hiding from.

Let yourself know the thing
you are trying not to know.
And the minute you hear this instruction
you will feel precisely what that knowing
is you must let yourself know.
Know it and that pain will cease.

Or is it better sometimes to keep the pain
and let the knowing go?

25 July 2002

ROSES OF SHARON

Roses of Sharon

now

middle of summer

announcing the end of the affair

all my roses, my leprosies.

Don't start

what you can't finish

a northern philosopher

knows time

comes to its end

even if she proposes

to go on,

it is an island

we live on,

thickets with no Prospero

and these soft crimson trumpets

l'ange qui annonce la fin du temps

what pours out of the bell

sweet names of what we lost and what we lose.

25 July 2002

A WARNING TO THE THOUGHTFUL

That it was looking at me a while
from the trees, that it saw me sitting
apparently doing nothing. This 'nothing'
it interpreted as waiting. Waiting
for it. So it came to me.

Chisel that on my gravestone, mother.

26 July 2002

MY GRAIN

It is too much
being myself
that hurts

the grain
of my difference
squeezes arteries

o let
the no one in

a word
hurts
my head

migraine mi-crâne
half my head
hates the other

this means
war, this means you.

26 July 2002

[TEXT BROUGHT TOGETHER anew

maybe FOR THE MATSON ANTHOLOGY on 9/11]

Try to say it
the empty place the no

need to say
anything say it

all people
understood
what a shadow is

they threw it
down at our feet

all day
we count our dead

bodies our books
of history rot
on Jersey barges

waiting for us to understand

the only thing I did to help
was be afraid

talked instead of doing
slept with open hands

dust debris

the sky fell down

all the tawdry

symbols of missing

the point

forget the numbers

to kill a single person kills the world.

[edited 26 July 2002]

The life of King Gesar, a folk epic of the ethnic Tibetan group in China, is the world's longest epic, comprising 36 volumes in 15 million words, with one million to 1.5 million lines in poetry alone in addition to those in prose. The epic enjoys unfading popularity in area inhabited by people of the Tibetan, Mongolia and Tu nationalities.