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INTO THESE OTHER WORDS

Struggle to keep an eye on the natives
the Dæmon borrows us. Spigot
uncontrollable, it gushed all night.
By morning I was someone new
setting out for the post office
like a man in a canoe.
The isolation. Kayak for example,
a world full of kayaks and the sun rising.

I helped a self forgive me, you.
There was no one waiting, the dream
remains frightening whenever I remember,
there was no conspiracy you thought
and the man you were looking for
constantly got off the bus
while I was talking. My fault,
like so many things, my desert poetry,
my collection in little amber boxes
of *mégots illustrés*, cigarette
butts smoke by famous men.

And now the sun's in my eyes too,
one more elegy. November this time
belongs to the colors, the library
gapes for more victims, inside
even the walls have words
and no one needs to dream.
A library's a place half inside your body

anyhow, a kind of toilet
where the excrement remains
but you are flushed away.

Take then away from now.
A specter calls. The birds
("believe the birds") interrogate
the little seeds, they eat,
last innocents in creation.
Uncreated. A handle for your heart.
This interlude in the partite
is brought to you by the disaster,
what's left after your anger,
a mad friend foaming at the heart.

Or are we trapped in quotations?
My legs are sore from yesterday
walking around the invisible basilica
three miles around the walls of it
streets of the city that made me born.

5 November 2002

CUNEIFORM ENTITLEMENTS

to write by touch
pressing it in
so that which takes
the word is changed by it
forever, not in substance
but in form, amen

do you hear me?
This is what music means,
a soft prophecy that changes time
and wakes me up so I can see
all things awake around me

a word is a photograph
stilled of the whole movement
to see it, the boring word context
is used for this, but maybe
everything there is can only be
seen con-text, with the word
that pauses, that discloses.

A word
fits into language
as a finger sinks into clay
presses, even the idlest touch

a fingerprint remembered

What do I leave in you

narrow furrow in such a broad tablet

furrow after furrow

always changing direction

always filling up the field

and when there's no more room is that a word?

6 November 2002

LEND ME YOUR DECEIVER

so I can love love too.

There were so many bricks
in the garden wall
I could never tell which brick
was the special one
the one that really was the wall
while all the rest
cherry red they were and hoar a bit
from so many winters
between Mark Twain and now
were just attendant circumstance
as the grammarians says
or a cast of thousands
trying to represent
the huge enormity of time or wall
or holding flowers captive
or keep deer out, those elegant
suburban nibblers who look like love
a bit and delicate but run away

so where is the wall in all those bricks
the one I love and where
is botany among chrysanthemums
even in the gruff November wind
still nubby yellowbronze an inch
out of reach of my ankle?

I come to you as an essentialist
in a random neighborhood, missionary

to put my finger on the spot
where heaven touches earth in you
successfully as Everest but very small
right here or maybe not
at least we're out of the chill old garden —

there can only be one of everything,
a strange game where every card's the ace.

7 November 2002

BUT THIS WIND IS YESTERDAY

a miller and his daughter ground it
I dreamy it sifting through my lower body
σπλαγγνα the vitals they said
between the liver and the come-again
where what I am is different
from what I think

and all I am
is ready to become another animal,
god, looking glass, missionary,
man,

it's up to you, my dear,
my surrogate reality in apple yard
and the least I whisper in your ears
is heard by Napoleon on dank St Helena's
wondering when his time too will come again.

7 November 2002

EVERYTHING GOES UP TO THREE

then starts again.

Sunrise. Three fingers
on each hand, three hands
to write three different tongues,
three's enough, the mother's
the father's the child's.

The secret of all beauty
is speaking the child's language
from the mother's mouth
while the father listens
all ears. Because an ear
shapes what is muttered
into what can be heard.

Mutter. She is in control
of what is said, a father's
language is resistance,
just resistance. A child's
is penetration, opening
the open. Give me rules
to break them, give me boundaries
so I can conquistador a while,
transgress the smug horizon.

8 November 2002

GLA[N]S

Stroke by stroke
the finial is shaped
until it speaks

This is the end of a man
the spar, the jib
the mountain on a shallow sea
the acorn that springs a thousand oaks
the mute conspiracy, ruby,
weakforce, shipwreck, fallen mast
beagles barking in the swamp of fugitives
hangdog, apple pip, smoothest stone
ever-budded never blossoming rose

Of course the end of one begins another
how would language be
if you were not previous to me

being other you make
everything possible
almost necessarily so
“Adam’s first bite retched into speech”
I was saying that sin made him vomit
and what he vomited was language

most felix culpa of all our felixes

most like a red fox nuzzling your matrix

so uttering is othering
so the ductile power
must operate upon
interior or inferior material

as to say, following the tall precisian,
breath is the magma of the heart

we orifice

And 'we' obsesses an altogether
no one really believes in
do we?

The red person in the pale hood
talks to himself in your mirror

You want him too Him you is want
A word wants

Dico tibi

a word wants

A word wants to get out
but does it want to get Out
because that's where you live

(out = other)

or does it just want to get out
and you are witness?

Are you hearing me
or am I talking to you

it's rare
these two
to happen once

I am always at the boundary of myself
a self is always a boundary
of something else

Our oldest superstition is language
that the word can breach
that something can be said

it is more beautiful than hula dance and Christmas tree
it is the Pope on fire and Athena odalisque

o moon
you old dictionary

you remember
every word we ever said
but you're sleeping

Who will tell me what I mean?

Is it still my animal when it's sleeping?

Purr to me
outsider, let me hear
the bronze wheels rattle
that sneak the old moon
down the sky

she was a word once
before she was every

the lonely language no one speaks
a kind of everlasting Latvian
high above, spilling
moonlight but making no further sense
to pester us with information

I began my life by being you

The Autobiography of Karl Marx
as told to Alcibiades in Hell
while both were sleeping
translated into modern talk by Theodor Adorno
thence into Spanish
by Lorca's last boyfriend
withered now but still wears lipstick
from whose mouth
disguised as a girl from Ohio
I heard it
murmured sweetly by the fireplace

colored flames from salts of metals

green fire she pressed up against me
the negative weight of human narration
it doesn't press us down it raises
it supports us as we listen

the whole narrative only exists
to bear onwards to you
the words by which it's spoken

put the man inside the woman and the clock shrieks

The real
is what which begs for mercy

The blue flame burns only under water

O you again, you are the lathe
on which such wood is turned
friction and fantasy and dread
explosion underground in Sweden
a hundred miles away drunks stagger
in the street by the canal

from one thing said

because a drunken person is invisible to him or herself

she or he lives alone in language
a plaything of that wind
for the term of drunkenness

sobriety means the sleep of language

people use other sign systems then
money and knives and tambourines
the long imbecile sentence of guitars

Youless, morning strikes
And then I understand
how the system works,
the steering wheel, the three-egg omelet
tipping in diners, the self-serve pump
the cash machine and first communion
it all makes sense
when you flee from it over the frontier

A word can only be erased by language

Not until I have a miracle to tell
will some goose break formation overhead
and flutter down and proffer
me its wing feather to write this down
saying in goose talk My job is done
you have to get the ink yourself

or from yourself

the twin miracles of language:

writing and erasing

only the written language has both,

only the written is complete

speech has an imperfect form of erasure

called forgetting

and silence is hopeless,

silence is never silent enough

silence remembers, silence resounds

I can just tell you the images

you have to do the theory part yourself

theoria is seeing

theory's in the eye of the beholder

Theory is seeing this.

8 November 2002

CLERMONT

Waiting in the light a hill
at my side we walked
through an hysteria of leaves

hypnosis of same color
subtle shift, susurrus
of rustling information

endless to move
is to make sound
my eyes wide open not to see

8 November 2002

DREAM RAIDERS

I knew a girl once who could blast her way into my dreams. A day or so later, this is before e-mail, a phone call or letter would come, and we'd be in the same room of conversation I'd met her in while I was dreaming. These dreams were easy, no monsters, just the slight weirdness of being with someone without especially choosing to. And this was strange enough so that I'd wake up asking myself What was that? Who is dreaming me now? Then I'd remember her skill at this coercive interior conversation. What did we talk about in those compulsory interviews? Whatever was on her mind, not mine. As far as I can tell, I have no mind for something to be on.

8 November 2002

CHROMOSOMES

The chromosomes are waiting.

We are colored people because we have
chromosomes, right? The dictionary
told me that: *color bodies*

and you are dangerous
because I'm in your power
whenever we meet

the roots are lies
that grow up to be tree

that's why the etymology of anything
is such a sudden way to God

why couldn't we not have had anything
but what the Lord said

when he was a man in a boat a man in a crowd
just listen to what I say he said
and don't do anything to it
just tell it to the next woman you meet
the next soldier whisper it to the waters of some well

so by the end of the day
everyone will get the news.

9 November 2002

MISSIONARY MISTAKES

Stuff you put in salads what is it
nasturtium flowers
spicy little colors, bites

every word
must have its own mistake

the geography of error
my blue globe

I have known the roundness
and the hard
the place where maps
give way to fingers
in a world of thorns

a country where it's always midnight
and your name

glories like snapdragons
brandied raisins in blue flames

memory is a perpetual burning

I left a lot of things in San Francisco
but not my heart
my driver's license stays right here
four rooms and one piano

taste my fingers
this is what old language tastes like
in your young lips

my heart come home
a little singed from the Oakland fire
but otherwise right as the Rights of Man
and of the Citizen sourdough
the smell of airports
no Honolulu terrorism

just the indoor rain
the species-list damp in your hands
you visit the black-leaved codiaecum
glossy with red afterthoughts around the rim

lava cooling inside out
labia
a stone street walking by

a river in remembering
carries weird fish you never see
the rafts of all those evenings

you came to see me
displayed yourself as the horizon
due south of Diamond Head
all those unlikely stars

so I get the word wrong again
is that a fault or a philosophy

make sense of what I give you
it comes from love
and who knows where it goes

glad runagates you stay at homes
dream wetly of in August dawns
why couldn't you turn silver to
spread sail, climb down from the volcano

why is everybody else on fire
and you just damp on your pillow
while the Merrimack mill town wakes outside

and immigrants wait at the canteen
to buy a little chili for their bread
and who are you, grey midlands?

Don't blame me I ran away to see
the court ladies strutting in the queen's roses
their bosoms empowering me to ask
significant questions at the Admiralty
concerning breadfruit in the colonies

so they put me in charge of this ship *Forever*
to try out my powers and I have brought it
with loss of less than dozen lives

through inconceivable absences and mean reefs
all the way to Taprobane and back
with a Dutchman painting pictures on my hull
and a girl from Manila hidden in my cabin
you don't have to know the whole truth

this is only a narration

a relation of my years among the Jesuits
bringing my erroneous perhaps even heretical
interpretations out east
to wash them clean in oceans
and anybody's ears.

They listened
just like you now getting the idea
a man talks not to communicate
but be cleansed, relieved of the terrible burden
of his own silence broken into words
the silence that is so thick inside me
I'll never run out of things to say I think.

9 November 2002