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Now the evening
is alone with itself
alone as a stranger
dancing at a wedding feast
with woman after woman
strangers to each other and to him

the bride and groom left long ago
at the fuzzy boundary of sobriety
and are asleep on the jet now to Curacao

and you're still dancing
you're still dancing
and the light just won't leave the sky
as if it were drunker than you are

and knew it was time to leave
but knew also that everywhere is home.

11 February 2001

AU CREPUSCULE DU SOIR

you're still sitting still

and the darkness keeps trying to leave the house
to run free in the street
to darken the city

as if it were much more business-like than you are
and didn't know it had time to linger

and didn't know either that
once it leaves it can never come home.

11 February 2001

novels that are appropriations.

What I think about right away, and certainly what interests me most, are the actual expropriations/penetrations of other people's texts, like Kathy Acker's *Great Expectations* or *Thérèse et Isabelle*, or Tom Phillips's *A Humument* (or my own *Mont Blanc*). Then I think of those which, almost like historical novels (and why aren't historical novels thought of as appropriations - maybe they should be; then Post-Modern would start with *Ivanhoe*...[build an essay on this, small — address my dislike of the historical novel) like Vollman's *The Ice Shirt* or Yourcenar's *Hadrian's Memoirs* or *The Abyss*, which use old materials in present formal contexts - Quignard's *Les tablettes de buis* are like that, or Tom McEville's *North of Yesterday* or whatever that's called. Novelizations of movies, musicals and videos would have to fit in here somewhere, and Powers' *Three Farmers on their Way to a Dance* appropriating as narrative the August Sanders photo, or many of the short stories of Guy Davenport, like "The Airplanes at Brescia" (expropriating Max Brod's and Kafka's diaries)

Alternatives to the foregoing would be the following muscatels
Proffered by an encomiastic benedick to a feller needs a friend
Everybody is better off for being outside sweet chemicals
The hosting of the fairy folk inside your consciousness
And the tapdancers sprightly naked on your tongue, do tell.
I am too tired to understand the implications of explication
But if you insist on asking, why then I think that what I have said
Is a demonstration of the existence of non-human sentiency
All round the rocks and rills of this philadelphic wilderness.
They think and keep their tongues and we do otherwise.

12 February 2001

THE CAPACITIES

Revise. Reboss.
The convexity
Upon Achilles's shield
Shows you the world

You are at the core of it
Everything slopes away
Into the terrible
non-you distances.

You are sweet at the core
Like air, funny looking
The distortions
Of intimacy bewray

The proportions of your face.
It is like the Bible
Lost in translation
But we get the point.

Here is someone
At the middle of the world
And watching carefully
From behind the glass.

Brass. Shield. Shine.

12 February 2001

To have betrayed no one.
To be a brass scale
Balancing feathers against the weight of the air.

12 February 2001

To move beyond superstition
Perch in a bare tree
And use the whole sky for your mind.

13 February 2001

A line can be remembering
Then it touches another
And they forget together.

13 February 2001

How a line meets a line
Can be road kill

Can leave a faint flush of
Blood in the paper

After the crew has hosed away the evidence.

13 February 2001

he's trying to talk about the sky
but it won't stand still.

13 February 2001

=====

We can go through space at will at various speeds
We should be able to go through time with similar willed velocity

What is the common factor of space and time?
The human experience of extent and duration.

So in the realm of experience the throttle stands.

13 February 2001

How long we have to wait for privacy
Like a sword it gleams
And cuts us free — at fourteen, fifteen?
When that incredible moment comes
When you seem to be actually alone.

13 February 2001

It was a challenge to be continuous
So a roast beef sat in the oven and sap
Rose furtively in the more responsive trees
Willows mostly willows. Words do not naturally
Go with one another — like poles repel —
And it takes a lot of breath to hold them together.
This is what the Muse explained
As she danced around my living room
Shedding her silver feathers everywhere.

13 February 2001

Because of the difference I mean the one
that poured into the psyche from alluvium
you know, that stuff that rivers leave
according to the students of geology
(old fashioned eyeglasses, baseball caps,
safari vests, pepper mustaches)

the mind gets muddy from what it knows.

13 February 2001

VALENTINE

for Charlotte

I used to think it was because he was beaten to death
The way pounding heartbeats that tell us we're in love
Could kill us, because love is such a killer

But why Valentine?

All the martyrs were tortured
And there is no torture love spares us,
Metaphor or meat, the pain
Is what tells us we're in love. But the pain
Dies down, the heartbeat grows more regular,
Turns into music that we live together
and martyrdom becomes a joyous witnessing instead,
currency of actual exchange. The heart

has other gospels then to chant, the day, the night, the quiet
rapture of the evident. The evidence.
But why Valentine, Rome, soldier, beaten, Christian, stubborn, dies?
Because we die for love? We die anyway,
Love has nothing to do with it,

The pain is lyrical, the pain is life
And dying is just outrageous silence. Why Valentine?
They say the Lupercal was now,
The wolves trotting through the streets at night,
Whores and lusts and revelers, but that was rowdy
And love has not much room for rowdiness, needs the quiet agony
Of closeness, the quiet ecstasy of you.

So whose arrow is it that shoots through the heart?
Valentine was not a bowman, was not pierced for love,
Did not feel love's healing anguish and uneasy language,
Cheesy scenarios of do you and do *you*,
Love's terrible heartache that tells us nothing,
Even Valentine heard nothing, but he was stubborn,
love is stubborn, that must be the story,
we break each other's hearts and go on loving, go on living
with neat-plumed arrow in plump and pretty heart

and wonder where the feather's from to fletch the shaft.

14 February 2001

ALONG THE GRAIN OF ST VALENTINE'S

for Charlotte

It's not easy to say the truth, not easy
and not much fun, among the Disneylands
of lies, heart's opportunistic taradiddle
when heart is used to mean the real thing

the engine that runs all, the twenty-one gun
salute to feelings, the throb of more.
God gave us lies to tell and a Devil
to whisper bleakly of the truth,

the thing that's so hard to understand,
the simple presence that we share. We
particular. This we right here,
no random congeries, no universal bund,

just you and me. Because that is where love is,
the particular morning of stainless steel,
roses, the morning of bread, soap,
shadows of birds pass the windows.

Our windows. Je repète. I love you
in the quiet of yesterday, the strange
soft howl of tomorrow, a sense of animals
padding round the house. Just now

which never ends. I love you
in the uncertainty of eternity,
the everlasting grammatical complexity
of this simplest of all sentences we are.

14 February 2001

I prepared myself for the way, put on my white linen coat, girded my loins, with a blood-red ribbon bound cross-ways over my shoulder. In my hat I stuck four red roses, so that I might sooner be noticed amongst the throng by this token. For food I took bread, salt and water, which by the counsel of an understanding person I had at certain times used, not without profit, in similar occurrences. *Chym. Wedd.* ch.1

And what shall we do with that salt those circumstances
And who used bread? Is your bread the same as my water

In that we must live on both? And these four flowers
By which I hope to be conspicuous, an ape in amber,

A flute in France, and this red ribbon makes my cross,
What then? That is a kind of Coleridge question,

If I dreamed the sea, and crossed it, and found you were
And we turned into ourselves and spent twenty years

Growing the vibrant species of our destinies, what then?
Why then the dream would be no different from my shoulder

When you rest your head or just your arm against me,
No different from your mouth asking: *and do you dream*

These days, not necessarily of me? All dreams are you.
I am enrolled in that necessity. Hence the red cross or what

Ever it is that crosses my skin like wounds, like railroad tracks,
Like rivers, like deer footsteps in the shallow snow came overnight.

14/15 February 2001

iron the feather
made from itself
oxide flaking off

under earth a tool
to search heaven

this comes from there.

spilled from bracken shadows
stretch our feet towards
ratchet river sunspoiled dawn
can't see can't see

all which remembered even
tidescale by seem
to be what a man is not
woodmetal meaning lasting

15 February 2001

RAGA ASAVARI

(on the rudra veena, by Asad Ali Khan)

sewn pages distinguish for me all the blue old books of England
gilt crowns their covering spines I slowly animate the beast I am
to stand around in Cambridge bookshops flirting with the saleshelp
themselves haughty and beautiful and far
beyond the shabby market of my means I tried I tried so slow it goes
I never got anywhere with them and had to wait
for other queendoms to inherit my bliss from or blossom
tardy in the middle of soft nights oh it's all right an avenue is all I am
a habit of leaning slow against the sight of them

as if they were lamp posts and I wept in darkness.

15 February 2001

Measure the tame
Of je t'aime the m
Of the same, the middle
Letter the alchemist of sea

An old owl leaning on a tree.

16 February 2001

you can't help it
when the condensations begin
it is a flower of itself – or a fish
speaking eggs along the bottom of everything
as much as she can

16 February 2001

everything gets shorter when you're alive
which is why epics and operas are so grand
contradictions of experience
a four-hour minute a flower
with a hundred thousand petals you have to touch and count each one.

16 February 2001