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Should we as simple as a wave mounts
skill dogging shadow deeping to the next
without actually traveling, heave
and breathe down, a sluice of seeming
and the coast is just as far away as ever?

Only magic makes the rock come near.
The stint of will that marks the limit,
ambiguity of what we mean, a human
almost always shies away. A dog uses
93% of its muscular force at will, a human
barely 25. No wonder any animal
can work its will on us. We are afraid
to want.

 We are afraid to will.
They're different, will means ninety
three percent of your power is let loose
on what you want.

 Want
means just the shadow of a thing
cast back on you, you live in the shadow
of that object, that other, and you say
I want you to the shape that carves the shadow—

So it is that we are waves, mostly,
uneasy, rising and falling, never arriving
for all the moving, despite all the tumescences of lust.

18 August 2001

And being it later
maybe
 when you can

a silver candlestick
still holds the fire
nimble between
eye and music

glossy wood of the piano
o you call everything mahogany

however unnecessary
such illumination
may be in our day

18 August 2001

I know so little
Of what holds my hand
As Edwin Muir or Willa
Said in turning
Kafka English

Meaning: holds me back
Restrains me
From the act
Proper for a one like me

Whatever that is I am
To do, to make the place
Some recompense
For having made me

No idiom is sure
The expressions
Break on the wall
Not even time is certain
To pass

Today is already yesterday.

18 August 2001

nothing times itself is nothing still
which just proves how powerful a self is

and the luminous zero
spilled in the middle of the mind

19 August 2001

I wonder where all this is coming from or going
Our garage planet is not big enough for all these voyages
All the stalled travelers unconscious in their smelly sleeping bags
Camped on the slopes of some slippery Wisdom

How many doors do I have to keep opening
To let the rest of you in
Your hymens popping with erroneous ecstasies
Built out of bad memory and worse music and hope hope hope

There's no more room and when I say no more room
I mean I have routed the walls out to their thinnest
The cave goes down almost to the regions of fire
And still you keep tumbling in

What do you think this is, a church, a shopping mall,
Something where you have choices of some kind
And think that what you're choosing adds up to you?
Nothing of the sort. People are asleep in the cars

In the calendars on the old fashioned telephone handsets
They sleep in mail order catalogs on the medians of highways
And there is no more room. I know it's my fault
You don't have to shout. It's my fault and I'm sorry

I take up no room myself and there's still no room at all.

19 August 2001

JOSS

joss stick
burn in joss
house

deos, portuguese
for god

it is 1951
I walk down
Mott past
the old cathedral

the Chinese
temple on the left
open like a store

sweet reek
the retaliations
of memory

an eye for a smell
red blur

since then all
nights my cinnabar.

20 August 2001

FIRST ROSICRUCIAN SONNET

Resume natural course of sun's desire
for the moon though it doesn't know so. Prune.
Happen happens. The lunar skate
Breaks every month, one skids into the dark.
Rain-day it rains, Knife-day they fight.
Before that, how can the son remember.
Of course every woman is his mother.
Of course every light is the moon
Cold on the skater's lustrous skin
The sudden happening ice, sensation
Is somehow, sun how, on the other side of
Will. That makes you think. You
Who have always been a skater
Exiguous, on thin ice, a miracle no
Wonder the sun likes you. Onward,
Into the soup tureen. A proper life
Has unknown declivities. I reach
For a sudden illumination and find one's
Mother nibbling berry sherbet beside the rink.

*First Rosicrucian Sonnet — the Rosicrucian sonnet has nineteen lines
because the little child on the white horse is naked. The Sun is the gonfalon
of a political party that tends to get its way in this Parliament of Dream we
call The World.*

20 August 2001

SECOND ROSICRUCIAN SONNET

It looks like a cigarette on the oak table
Waiting for the sun to light it up, looks
Like a stick of chalk la maîtresse d'école
Draws tawdry syntaxes with on blackboards
Looks like a throwaway ballpoint pen
And here I am writing with it egregious sentences
No mistress would approve of, bad,
No commitment, not nearly enough verbs.
Looks like a cigarette again I stopped
Missing long ago, I seem to be creeping in
Again into this thrift shop of resemblances,
Imagine I smell of cloth and squeeze your breasts
But you still like what you see in the mirror
Where idle customers crowd to be judged.
Looks like a fat candle from your birthday cake
—Nobody smokes in your family — you licked
The icing off and tasted deep the dark crumb
Of devil cake inside, they know their business,
These philosophic pastry cooks, these Aristotles.

20 August 2001

things that rise or moon
to break the breath
with grieving
and all day long he grieved
had no idea for what or whom or why

he grieved the way the moon
makes the earth breathe

a gravity of letting go

20 August 2001

THE DOCTRINE OF ENGLISH VERBS

The doctrine of English verbs tells a sad science,
a lyrical experiment in being gone.

Sing, sang, sung — doing it, did it
and now it's done. But what's to come?

I will sing. Sure. We hear that will,
future marker, and know it means I want

and we know how it is with wanting,
getting what I want. Even when my will

is bent to my desire like a man
breaking his back rowing his dull boat,

all his strength, and can't see, can't see
where he's going, we row backwards,

we will backwards, our life
a grand ass-wise sashay into the dark.

On water. On ice. The doctrine
of English verbs will break your heart.

21 August 2001

A name refers to falling water
a lotus spread on foreign pond
and a frog among its branches

managing to look like one.
This is the ancient
practice of the wise, be
where you are
and look just like the place

for I am a Jew among Jews
a lamp post —somewhat dimmed—
up the back street
in your neighborhood, darling,

shining in your rear window
when you think you're looking at a tree.

Or a necklace
stones that whisper round your neck
dictionary of lusters

they want to be soft of course
the way stars die to be near

give all their light.

ca 21 August 2001

In a world where there is no such thing as coincidence — that is, the world in which we live — a person must accept or reject any offered connection that comes along. If you reject it, it will present itself to you over and over again, perhaps in less appealing forms (but maybe in better forms, you never know) until one day you lose, suddenly, the power or skill to evade it. Then suddenly you do not fail the encounter.

If, on the other hand, when it's first presented, you choose to embrace it, you will indeed be fully linked to it and its personnel (whoever they are), and though the link will be strengthened for further meetings with them in this life (perhaps) and (certainly) future lives, the actual person or situation chosen will, like everything else in our world (including our world) decay, separate, weaken, appear to be lost, appear to die.

So our actions — strictly chosen with our free will as they are — can accept the connection (knowing it will perish in time from the disease called How Things Are), or they can reject it (knowing that it will keep coming till you let it in).

What you can't do is bring to you anyone who does not in some sense already belong to you.

What you can do is recognize in your attractions and aversions to other people both profound and timeless affinities with them. The old expression *seize the day* really means: study each connection. Fulfill each connection if you can.

21 August 2001

By Æsop's stream sat on white birch logs
watching green. A bikini passed
without a body. A ship without a sea.
But never you without me.

22 August 2001

To lose the point by winning.
To *leave the room* as a word.

Grammar of actions, of gestures.

Filming the actual = filming a psychoanalytic session,
intact, unseen.

Watching language in other words.

I want to see what she'll say.

Toute pensée émet une seule image.

22 August 2001

CHIMERA

And I tasted you today
spirit corked in some star

particular to our shared
germinal, we are twinned
out of absence and genius

I think of you and lean against your car,
Dante, the one you drove up through the Eucharist
when our One Love was standing on this earth
and I was you.

But *no*, he answers, — *when you were she*.

She was Dante, you were Beatrice: each
now resolute to fondle
the life-giving epistemology of the other.

Of being other.

22 August 2001

(Axinn Images)

Over the steeple the lady floats, stiffbodied
through a planisphere that tries to interpret her
sign by sign

no zodiac is ever complete

but between the noblewoman's head a stone thinks at the foot of the ladder

against a sky full of improbably countable stars
one Bodhisattva blossoms from a gardenia or mimosa

itself the flower of the world — sugar of light.

(Of course I don't what kind of flower it is,
I don't know the stars by name,

the Arabic honesty that reckons the tiles of night).

Three images, complex but not complicated, by Jennifer Axinn.

When you look close, an ordinary town, a gardenia,
statue, a faded collage.

But we don't see these images nude. They are
meant for us to know or guess the source

these pictures are all about their sources
these pictures are all about knowing your mother and father

a little town in Germany, a female gymnast
artiste from a circus, the circus of all passed time,

in tights, colorless, the Acrobat of History.

Wherever this deed/dame/done comes from,
all of them, wherever they come from
they dare us to remember their 'origins'
the source from which Axinn lifted them

But things have no source. They are only findings,
causeless flowers, people from the sky,
a handshake in an empty room.

Children always know more than their parents,
that is why they come into the world

to tell us more, tell us new.

When I look at her pictures I feel like a mother —
my child has given me a carefully inscribed word
in an alphabet she discovered before me

I have to read.

Bless those who give us something to read.

And these texts, so they are, the dare of her work,
these pictures move singularly — as paintings scarcely ever do —
through time:

forcing us (daring us) to retreat through memory, association, re-collection,
before we can bring ourselves, armed, to the place where she has simply
posed the thing to be seen

then we discover what we need is right there.

The hard memory work we did
now just has to be peeled away —

it left us supple, raw a little, dazed by the simplicity of the thing we look at.

Letters of a name.

So I read these images three ways:

Egyptian way, beasts and signs and possessions slung into a smooth cartouche like the name of a lost Queen

Chinese way, ideograms, composed with precisely balanced morphemic glyphs from here and there (i.e., language, the world). [As Xu Bing writes English — “Square English” — as if it were Chinese, Axinn writes Chinese words as if each were the ornamental title page of a 19th Century children’s book.]

Jewish way, images of the three-consonant roots that know how to say everything that is the case.

She dares us to read.

23 August 2001
(30 VIII 01)

(Axinn Images, 2)

So these pictures are the letters of a word.

Not Egypt, not China, not Phoenicia,
not the Houses of Prayer in Galicia where Our Fathers bent over the book.

It is the eyes,

The eyes have the biggest alphabet of all.

Each kind of grass or tree a diacritical of green,
each each a specifying, each actually each.

But around all the others each one fits.

Each day I took the long walk from the university
through the cemetery and the quiet rich streets
up through the Turkish quarter past Kröpcke,
the leaning tower of Gehry on Goethe,
the lust of theory, the lust for theory,
for theory is of eyes and how we see,

cool evenings, the green police,
sweet lemon squash from Ankara,
hard to know I was in Germany,
the simple beings of high summer

a sinner sitting happy under a tree.

And this is a word I read in her book too.

A sinner pregnant with the dark of names.
I am Jakob. I come to you again.
You are the Bible let me read you
Bent over you spread out on my lap.

No. Please. No, I am not your language

I am what language happens *for*,

not a book, not a bondwoman
of endless interpretation,

listen, all I need is come to me and stay.

All right, I come. And staying
is the longest word

Chapter of Superlatives. Young man old hair.

But what does this word *say*?

24 August 2001

THE PENGUINS OF CONNECTICUT

Sometimes the first thing that comes to mind
Is all you need. An answer
For that stern young nun who strides

between the rows of scarred desks bolted to the floor.
You are bolted to the desk, the book
And its alphabet are bolted to your mind.

Break free of the book, word, meaning,
Break free of the breath and the heart,
Isn't there anybody here except the heart?

Everyone is well-dressed in heaven,
That's how you know. Hell is so casual,
So spontaneous. That's how you know.

24 August 2001
Salisbury

GLADIOLI

not so little
swords

red
and redder still

every flower is a birthday

come over and over again

I make a vow to you
I make a vow to you
I make a vow to you

24 August 2001

After long silence I have forgotten how to hear music

24 August 2001