

11-2000

**novF2000**

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## CREPUSCULE DU JOUR

Being at the necessary place  
Like a tree

In the rain  
A tree

The way a tree is  
poem  
Sloping towards the afternoon  
Along the subjunctive of the light itself

Fading into uncertainty

The way I love.

This is an essay called *Reading by Twilight*

I am still considering quietly  
Who I must become  
To write it.

Because no one writes in his own voice, never,  
Language is everybody's  
And what it says  
Comes from every mouth to every ear

And what we call style, Anatole, is only the stink of me.

That beautiful redolence  
For which we study and love and kill.

And who should I say I am now  
When I say I love someone and mean it?

26 November 2000

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it is the way the rain drops  
have colonized the gaunt  
twigs of the bare spiraea

each drop depending  
at a decent distance  
from another

the neighborliness  
of gravity  
the gleam of each

individual secure  
a moment's koh-i-noor  
in the empire of light.

26 November 2000

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Or it could go this way  
a star beset by shimmer  
its unaccountable  
attractiveness to which we tend

mercifully shortlived or else forever  
we would be worshipping  
a vanished splendor.  
Look down, daughter,  
  
the earthlight means us.

26 November 2000

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Because no one knows what she's thinking  
One gets a reputation for ignorance  
Whenas in fact (in silk) there is no  
Knowing. None. No one. Knows  
What she is thinking.

The ignorance of design  
Extends to the last breath.

I am trying to say  
(I won't let myself say) that I do not know  
and want to know what you are thinking.

The silence is killing me. The only fatal  
Animal is to say nothing. My appetite  
Is killing me too. That ghost of old desires  
Panting in my ear. Your ear. Yearning  
For the distant interiors of the closest skin.

For words beyond any words I've ever  
Managed to say. In other words  
For the future. In other words for you.

26 November 2000

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Reading her pulse at a nearby table  
One brunette does another  
And the man talks. One rubs  
With her thumb Two's wrist  
Who's listening to Three.

And Four over here, ol' me  
At our own table  
Can feel the currents, *qi*,  
*Prana, energeia*, rampant  
Down the allure of arm  
Pervading the soft meat

A message from the soul  
Immensely even terribly  
Desperately far away.

26 November 2000  
Woodstock

## SILENCE IN FALCARRAGH

Silence in Falcarragh  
Was what the night made,  
No moon, and the mountain.

It was dark as God meant  
The heart to be, not a glimmer,  
Trust your feet, trust nothing.

You're on your own at last  
With gorse bushes beside the road  
To stab you if you waver

And the sheep complain beyond the gorse  
And the easy dog beyond the sheep,  
You're on your own to feel your way

So learn to do that every day,  
Walk through the bright market too  
With your eyes closed and be

Close you are to your own house now  
The darker dark up there ahead  
That might be the old thing you mean.

27 November 2000

## AU ROI CACHÉ

The hidden ruler  
who measures the world

his stick stretched out  
along us

lord measure this body  
into her mind lord

measure her meaning  
into my heart lord

these absurd words  
ceiling, floor, dog, word,

love, who, me.  
The hidden monarch

beneath the obvious.

27 November 2000

## ZONES OF A NON-LINEAR DISCOURSE on the RED SEAL

Non-linear because I want to draw you into the circle of reflection and consideration and trial and error of this process I've been working on for several months now.

1  
RED SEAL  
red seal records  
re/a/d seal

seals of Donegal  
a seal in Galway harbor

2.  
COMPOSITION IS RESEARCH

3.  
caves of the Dordogne and the Pyrenees  
are topological extensions of our minds  
brains calvaria  
where we find scratched on the wall  
ONLY what we are prepared to read  
The decipherments of rock scratches  
Sobin, Eshleman et al.

4.  
read the impressions on the mind  
read the fissures folds  
for the brain also is a process of creases and folds  
cerebral cortex cork rind of our tree  
to write on bark  
beech bark smooth beech = *Buche* = buch

5.  
to make the mind disgorge  
its buried darknesses

to make the dark speak  
without trying to turn it  
into the presumptuous light

like honoring the dream  
by dreaming it

by carrying it around by day  
by reading/re-reading it

*not by interpretation*

*but by dwelling with*

because reading a book is dreaming someone else's

I mean to enter the caves — whether Lascaux or language — and come out with a decent dark thing, a word or poem,  
That does not presume to interpret what was found down in there

But is itself the fruit of that *sweet encounter* with the, in the, dark.

Anthrôpos pantôn metron said the Greeks,  
The human is the measure/means of all things,

What was carved on the rock wall  
Speaks in us now.

6.

BREATH is the light that illuminates the word

...hence the world.

Variation on Cocteau: *Un seul souffle éclaire le monde.*

Learning to breathe in the dark

7.

read seal  
= radix too,  
the radical,

passing a little intersection in a Boston suburb  
and seeing it was called Red Square

(not far from the courthouse where Sacco and Vanzetti were persecuted and destroyed)

Red Square  
Red sign  
The radical  
Interpretation

A word is radical, is root

**A word is radical, so we have found the roots**

And spoken them

8.

Don't expect any person to do two lives at you.  
The poem is a treatise

And sometimes the poet uses prose as a disguise  
(like Lorca's wonderful plays, or Olson's wonderful essays)

**the poem is a treatise that can never be made obsolete by subsequent research  
because the poem is the prime investigation of its world disclosed.**

9.

Red Seal records,

Records then were disks with grooves on them,  
In wax, shellac, vinyl later,

As now the optical gleams refract from the whirling CD

Grooves of light

Light refracted, light concentrated,

To find the center of light.

Let all thought leave a mark  
On some wall,

then invent a system to read it,

this reading system is called writing.

(Now I read it to you and you write by hearing)

10.

The oldest sign  
The red hand on the wall

Read what someone thought,

Read how someone leaned  
Her hand against the wall.

28 November 2000

## SOMETIMES TRYING TO BE LINEAR

O I could write a  
sentence if I had to  
a sentence  
if I had two  
I could give one  
to you. I could  
write you a sentence  
if I had to, I could  
write you as a  
sentence and you would  
have to. Too.  
If I could write you  
a sentence  
you could have two.

29 November 2000

## PERFORMANCE

Loud SOFT  
FAST slow

What else  
Is there to know?

29 November 2000

FILL ALL THE WORDS WITH SQUARES

A light outside the window  
Just say what you see

If you could say it all  
That would be everything

And the old world  
Would be finished

Done like an Irish song  
A Yiddish song

Done like a fish  
No longer in the stream

And the new world  
Could begin

And it would all be your fault  
And you would be

God of it  
And it would be your face

Alone  
That looked back at you

From all the still waters.

29 November 2000

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I don't need to know

transports  
heard words

there and here  
occasionally

defiled by sense

what the Men of Old  
called meaning

they smeared it  
lewdly

black on a purple leaf

29 November 2000  
listening to Caroline Bergvall

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Not us but it

This weird song  
no one sings we are

nobody knows

where this will never end

*toujours* one says

a word for  
hundreds of years

clinging  
to the sound of itself.

29 November 2000

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Why does pillage  
Rhyme with village

(the gather of the one  
is the scatter of the other)

Why does kiss rhyme with bliss?

(a mouth whispers into yours  
all you need to have said

and your lips say be clear be clear  
say more make sure

I understand)

Why does breath rhyme with death?

(one is the echo of the other)

29 November 2000

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When you fold this paper in half nine times  
You will reach the moon

That's all you need.  
Unfold it then

And see a picture of the sun  
As it really is,

Naked, stripped of its light.  
Just the actual one

Itself, all its busy furnaces asleep.  
Then fold it up again

And come to me  
The sun in one hand the moon in your other.

Come, I am waiting,  
I have been waiting since before you were born.

29 November 2000

## OBLIGATION TO STORY

Years ago I published a novel (still in print in a second edition from another publisher) called *The Scorpions*. The structure of the book had appeared in my mind before the details of the narration, so in a sense I was writing the story into the structure. The last chapter of the book was the first one I composed, and I wrote towards it. The story excited me — a psychiatrist who falls into the delusory world of one of his patients — but I was even more fascinated by a new sense of time and order. How time works, in the real world, in the written world. The image of a (wind-up) clock that runs down and stops at some moment obedient to its own law, not to the external world or the convenience of its user. And yet the time it told along the way was true time, real time. In the event, the novel seems to end in mid-sentence, as if the story is incomplete. My hope was that the serious reader (or hungry reader) would experience a shock of awareness and understand that the story had indeed reached its conclusion. There are lots of road signs along the way that prepare the reader.

When the book came out, the poet Robert Duncan, with whom I was and remained close, wrote me a severe letter, accusing me of a sin against Story (I think he saw her as a tall, slender Pre-Raphaelite maiden) for ending the book without ending the story. For me the book was the story (or Story, even), and I felt then and feel now that far from sinning against Story, I had discovered one

more way for her to twitch her long gown, another way to reveal the secret ankles of the world, another way to tell.

Nonetheless, Robert proclaimed that I had incurred an “obligation to Story.” I took his proclamation seriously, because of my immense respect and admiration for him and his work, and indeed, I was soon enough writing more and more fiction (The Scorpions had been pretty much my first), much of which was certainly obedient to (even some old-fashioned sense of) Story. I’ve published half a dozen books of fiction since, though most of my work continues to be poetry.

So you can perhaps share my surprise and excitement when I found that phrase “obligation to story” in your poem - - the first time I have ever encountered the phrase anywhere since. It felt (to be honest) like the old poet Duncan speaking to me yet again through the young poet . . . Poets have long believed that one of the many things the act of writing does is to provide a “local habitation and a name” for disembodied poets, voices, lingering (or newly arrived) intelligences. . .

(29 November 2000)

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as remorse reminds a maiden so

bricabrac her great-aunt's parlor

spill to me the shadows of your fire

a child huddles by the fireplace  
reading an old book with soft pages  
his uncle gave him from his own childhood  
and as the child reads about the sufferings  
of the West Point cadet with toothache  
the sinister opium den where Chinese seek  
to comfort and capture him  
he thinks behind the storythinking mind  
the other mind's activities

soft paper old book oldbook new fire  
I smell the paper and the fire

old soft old soft I live where I am  
I live inside a body and the body

knows the world a different way  
from any way I do, my body is not me

but something is soft something is paper  
something is old something is fire

and then he sleeps into the story  
and the fire begins to speak Chinese  
and the long opium dream of a material world  
surrounds him in soft darkness  
and hides him from himself

you are soft paper  
I write on you whatever word I want

and when you wake  
you won't be able to tell

me from the fire  
and the book  
that's under your cheek now  
and you will take up in your sleep-numbed hand  
will be written with nothing but shadows.

30 November 2000

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I had a gloaming too of morning. What wakes us is not the light itself but the dream chance changes when the light's titration changes the menstruum of mind alters the number of night's hydrogen atoms dwindle steeply towards the acid we call waking and the thought of one person moves clear in another person's sleep like a face seen suddenly in fog that tells a traveler he has come home.

30 November 2000

## THE WANDERING JEW

By now I have forgotten whatever it was I am supposed to have done. A crime maybe, or an incivility on a public street. In those days I must have imagined that an action had no consequences. I know that a stone dropped into a pool makes ripples, but I also know the ripples stop when they reach the side of the pond. I did not know that the world is a body of water that has no rim. We shiver in endlessness, and an act has no end.

I guess it was a small thing, since I feel no pain, no wheels of Ixion or sneering headwaiters of Tantalus. What was it? We were all Jews together, and one of them became famous, and this is the one I am supposed to have said or done something to. I remember his eyes, half weary, half something else, like a man with his mind on other things, as he looked towards me and said something about waiting for him.

Maybe he wasn't even looking at me. I don't remember having done anything to him, I mean I really can't look into myself and find a small guilty feeling mousing around furtively in the granary of my heart. Maybe I did nothing at all. Maybe he was really talking to the loudmouth next to me who was yelling in bad Greek. Maybe he was talking to the pretty woman in front of me who was crying, but whose soft hips pressed back against me. Maybe he was talking to us all. Whatever, whoever, I heard his

words. A fate belongs to the one who hears it spoken. I heard it, and it became mine. I wander, tired myself now, almost but not quite tired of myself, my mind hard put to it to stick to one thing. I feel now the way he looked then, and I wonder when he will come again or I will go.

30 November 2000

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All falling sounds are pleasing since it is when sounds rise that  
they threaten us with disappearance into some blue inference  
beyond the hands of hearing and leave us abandoned in this thingly  
paradise we scarcely know, hello to everything

30 November 2000