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THE ANIMAL

Look close and see
less than at first sight.
You thought it was
a bear or a dog or then
sloth or capybara or
drwosy wombat and now
you have no idea.
It has four legs and seems
to be covered with fur.
Its eyes are appealing,
half open, void of intent.
If your spouse came
up behind you and touched
you on the shoulder
and said What are you
looking at? you'd have to say
I don't know, or else
dissemble and guess
or lie outright: that
is a Pleistocene mammal
now extinct. Your spouse
would probably not
believe you, spouses
are like that, but would say

**Poor thing! because
spouses are like that too.
Later you would wonder
if it meant that thing
in the picture or you.
There is much to mourn
when we look at things,
especially things
we can't name, things
with soft eyes and fur.
Things looking at you.**

11 November 2013

=====

**Hearing the cry
of the paint in the painting
the pigment in the paint
the colors in the fallen world**

**everything turns
into something I can hear.
Something that deafens me.**

11 November 2013

=====

**How to see
the lines of light
actually coming down
soft as snow
into the slow
world of things
seem solid
to make them visible,

to see the actual
breathing light
on its way,
now and then a bird
breaking through the pattern
joyous, pretending
it can go faster than.**

12 November 2013.

=====

**Catch a root
in the blue
swimming one
summer all
that memory
takes mistakes —
breathe it out
a little it's gone
with summer went
no not at all,
you never loved
her anyway.**

12 November 2013.

=====

**Man mending fence
all I can see
is white word
coupled to weathered.
We keep going
somehow, we old
wood, we
boundaries.
One more winter
like a German song—
a boundary
is something that sings.**

12 November 2013

THE FLOWER

These pictures!

No colors!

How can we know

a person's name

if we can't tell

red from green,

what color are they?

Let me call it

blue, hydrangea,

my favorite, wet,

drenched even

with rain or dew,

a thousand flowerets

on the big head,

Himalayan,

Tara holds one

in her left hand,

a flower like the sky

come down

to touch you.

But what if it's not

blue? Who are you

then? Are we

who we are

**because someone
loves us? Is that
all a flower means?**

12 November 2013.

=====

**Wanting to touch
not enough.
A feather fell
I kept it long —
who knows how
much time it takes
for an action
to be complete,
this feather still
falling all this while
motionless, stuck
in the back of a book,
this one. I'm
feeling it now
and still no end
to its descent.**

12 November 2013.

THE SALT SHAKER

**Chemical of my heart
come near me
sprinkling your dangerous
snow on bland old
vegetation. Touch
meat with thy medicine.
Improve. My blood
is copper is silver
is gold is mostly
salt. I am a tower
made of salt, fine
ground sea salt
from Brittany or Arles.
I don't know
where I am from —
I am a chemical,
a tower, a flower
forming where tide
kisses shore,
a wavering line recalled
as if the eye too could taste.**

12 November 2013.

THE PLURAL OF I IS ME

for Csongor

**so many things happen to
and I says me to all of them,**

**I am nowhere but asleep
dreaming what happens to me and me.**

**Because I am never the same.
It begins before I wake up,**

**I am me already curled in the bed,
my hand shielding my face from the dark.**

12 November 2013

=====

**Let the loose ones understand
exhausted by variation
they even call it metamorphosis
The rock sits down.**

**He became his constituents
he settled into his defining
moleculars. He was.**

2.

**Epic is like that.
No man escapes his nature
but women are not chained
to what they mean.
Of *khandro* nature
free to walk the skies
of their imaginations.
It is not good for her to sit down —
wars start, walls fall,
her brother lies dead in the cornfield
while Union soldiers stumble to the creek.**

3.

**I remember this from my molecules—
who else knows anything?**

I was there. Ancestors.

Everywhere

they were I am.

4.

**Identity porous, a name
like water. Call me
from the dark answer.**

13 November 2013.

THE FAIRYTALE

Entranced? Or ordered?

A swig of juice
by the tree itself.

I saw a maiden
she had no hair,

I saw a stretcher
with a dead man on it

I saw a mirror
men carried through the orchard,
I ran to keep from seeing what it showed.

2.

Later, huddled in the chill
inside the charcoal burner's shed

I heard some foxes
barking in the woods.

They sound like axes
being sharpened
on wet stone.

They sound like the wheezings
from my chest
that wake me up sometimes
from my own sleep.

3.

He said foxes is what they are
and I believed him,
though I don't believe much.
Gods and men have
too many good reasons to live.
I honor their ignorance
with my incredulity.

4.

But really we know everything.
We're all alone
in the same forest.
There is no end to what just seems.

I listened carefully to what would come next.
No noises out there now,
just a cold
same as in here.
We are pierced by where we are.

13 November 2013

ACE

**A cup
made of all of us.**

13.XI.13

=====

**The one you see over there you love so much
because her shadow matches yours
curve by curve and inch by inch,
a soft warm fuzzy mirror walking by your side.
And so you climb the mountain top together.**

**This is your first volcano. The crater smokes
but you can see no fire, no molten lava,
only this body beside you vague in fumes
that come from the middle of the earth.**

**Your earth. What do you really think?
You'll never tell, and that's what gets you loved,
remembered, a mystery walking around
in women's clothes, smiling at everyone,
revealing nothing. Or only to your shadow.**

13 November 2013, Shafer

=====

**Let each feeling have a number.
Then divide love-for-offspring
by love-for-parent. If the result
is a whole number larger than one
you go to hell. Another name
for hell is how things are. So change.
Amor fati is also *amor patris matrisque*
as we say in the very oldest French.**

13 November 2013, Shafer

LAUNDER

The three

**volume preface to
an unwritten book
detains me.**

**The text smells of lemon
and includes color photos of the countryside
around Arles and Saint-Rémy,
you'll think of Van Gogh maybe.
We're always thirsty,
people like us.
and the authorities (strange
that such a word should have a plural,
strange and terrible)
have closed all the cafes,
They know where trouble starts.
Look at that olive grove, this field
of lavender. It heals your eyes
and other burns. What it does
is refuse to remember.**

**You are clean
when you smell this.
Stop thinking about Van Gogh.
I'm talking to you
and you're the only you I have.**

13 November 2013

