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The soup pot the rust the old breadbox
devices

soup rust rot breadbox
save for another day

the glamor of
an ordinary thing

devices
for mining the mind.

Set out a week ago to cast off fat,
its own fat,

to give it away, fat is the surface of things,
fat rises, rust loves the surfaces of things
but rust runs in,

a pot of soup
set out to cast a week to last
and now it's frozen, what does it say,
what does the fat say when it comes
to the top of the liquid, forms
its own meniscus slowly,
stays there a frozen week,
what, who's asking, who wakes it
now, lifts the lid,

careful first
to sweep the bits of rust away
off the top of the soup pot

held down all the frozen week,
held by a nautical loop or hasp from
the beach grass down near the ferry found,
put on top of the soup pot top
to keep marauding coons and foxes off,
out— can they even
smell lamb fat in the freeze?

take no chances,
squire, anything you name
will also name some part of the mind
and when I say mind I may mean brain,
the results are still out, I mean they're not in yet,
a part of the mind belonging to
the imaged or imagined referent of that name,
as fox, soup, rust, hasp
anything will do the trick
("awake, awake," as Louis almost said).

But what of the breadbox?
Isn't there more than lucency
in the old roll-top, more than gleam
in the stainless door,
not so old really,
isn't there curl, and shape, and smoothness,
rhythmos, melos, all the Greek things
we like to mind,
the door slides open a quarter-circle,

not so old, really,
just a crack in the bottom,
wooden under all that sleek,
crack, not good for bread or such
since ants would come
columbusing and colonize,
no, not good for cookies,
not bad for keeping
 the odd bag of coffee beans
fresh in a frozen week outside,
ants don't drink coffee, yet,
 no ants
in winter or if there are, not here.
Where are all the lives that are not here.
The rust, though,
 is glamorous and rough,
reminds a girl
 of Bible passages when she was even younger,
squirming with boredom in Sunday School.
all flesh is grass, they warned her, grass that withers,
goes into the fire,
 flesh, but she knew better
she knew goddam well
that all flesh is flesh,
 and things are only worth their feel,
hell hell hell, let her sit still, sit and gaze all day,
all the rusty sunshine of a winter day,

**all flesh is flesh,
 she could or you could,
anybody,
 hold it, could dwell
on this rusty nautical device with composure,
no threat in it,
 this big heavy haughty iron omega,
some great Isis could come and loop it on her arm,
rattle on her sistrum,
 ça va?**

**Rust is best,
 the color
of time itself,
some say,
 or color
time likes to paint things with,
improving our pale world,
 finding out the blood of common things
or this is Russia
where 'red' and 'beautiful'
share some word in the ordinary
way people talk,
 I wouldn't know,
but so they tell me,
those busy people who read books
then actually go there, Bookland,**

the physical (the word 'real' is often used)
replica across the seas
of what they read,
all the *described things*,
Red Square, cheekbones, insidious ballet—

the soup has to wait even longer,
really the substrate or viscous heirloom
of a former soup, now ready
for its new antics,
 a quantum of kale,
aliquantulum salis, a bouquet
of mustard greens,
 a lump
(*bolus agni*) of long-stewed mutton hoofbone
to light the greens up with the brown
aftermath of meat.

 Red red red
red red sang the rust,

 this rust is for Sherry
 lives over the dairy
 paints in a tower
 over and over
 the strange black flower
botanized by so many poets in our day,
or a little bit before

she gathers rust
because we must
and in the loss
our beauty won
she spills in black and red
and no blood shed

or yesterday,

ah, there's more to a day
than opening the festive eye
nipping to the bathroom then standing
at the window and glomming at
your neighbors jogging by,
squire, it's the whole
Kantian enterprise de novo and toute suite,
imagine a question that fits your answer
and announce it in a noisy monograph
and so to bed—

but wait,

the sun's still rising,
you have all this light to get through,
all this sheer result,
and me an amoeba on your wash-stand
watching the shimmer in your hair—
but how did you come in,
isn't this
all about the soup, coffee, breadbox,

soup pot, prowling foxes, nautical hardware
 standing on deck in a clever wind,
 books about Russia,
 some man who walked to the end of the cosmos,
 neighbors trotting past with nary a glance at me,
 being invisible, breadbox, shiny hair,
 rusting all over,
 babbling somebody's name,
 walked all the way there
 whistling a tune by Aleksandr Glazunov
 whom my friend Martin studied with in Paris
 not long before any number of wars.

see, Time did it,
 bright wandering one,
 brought memory in
 and the names of famous composers
 to pin to the wall on oaktag,
 every class had its own Grade Composer,
 Grade Saint, Grade Poet
 mounted on the classroom wall—
 just the names of them, the names,
 the names are sacred, never a note
 of their sense or music were we given,
 just the names, the names are sacred,
the names are enough—
 but wait,

who is this we
sauntering feral but forgiving
out of Blessed Sacrament Euclid Avenue?

We live in the breadbox,
we are memory moldy ever green,
we are the ones who remember,
anybody who remembers
has been here too long,

the breadbox
that better, chaster, mind seems far away
but not forgotten.

Roll up the top,
a dry old American flag on a plastic stalk
is in there too, one of those flags
everybody gave everybody else
right after 9/11

and sheepishly a few
days were patriot—

that very Tuesday
when our wonderful plumber
came to finish the new downstairs bathroom
and we discussed what seemed
to be happening 130 miles south
as a direct result of a plane that had flown
over our house an hour ago—
that very flag.

what would we do

without plumbing,
to sweep those memories out to sea?
It's the old principle: pretty librarian,
learn to read,
begin anywhere,
every road goes home.

This could go on forever
so could the crows,
they have finished their morning offerings now
and gone to croak their solemn
high mass in another tree,
not far,
my favorite bird—
but what of me?

Soon
it will be time to strip mustard leaves
from their tough stalks
and chop them coarse,
get the new soup moving in the old soup pot,
put the top on top,
time will never come back,
Lenin moulders in his inefficient sepulcher
but I can't do anything about that,
a little prayer maybe, now and then,
for peace and stuff,
just make the soup,
squire,

someone is bound to eat it and be glad.
Or at least warmed and nourished and
what else happens when you have been in the world
so long,
eating and rusting and watching,
Che Guevarra started by wanting to heal the lepers,
intentions rust,
things turn red,
take on a hard core policy,
Emerson lingers indoors
reading the lovely book of his found mind,
me, I go
down to that little stream
with all the fish
down below Yosemite
and spend the night
dreamng the water
back to the rock
back to the sky
grieving for my lost years
or I go
out in the snow to fetch the paper in.

27 January 2013

A KINGDOM UNDER SNOW

1.

A tenor tells a courtesan
it's time for both of them
to repent—but they have to
repent in the flesh—

that's what music is,
the opera explains,
there is Reason in the
slightest sound or touch
which if followed
all the way will lead
to heaven—or such
heaven as women and
men can bear to dwell.

2.

But the broken forest looms.
Warlocks bereft of their witches
crack stones in mortars
try without fire to make a cement
that will hold the mountain up
and not let the sky come down,

**a thick, interesting menstruum
in which their herbs can mingle
and make the birds sing again.
They try to grind rock into spring,
lick salt off the back of the wrist,
squeeze their eyelids tight
until the sun breaks free.**

3.

**The repentant courtesan is in the desert now,
her technocratic lover close behind.
They sing a song of water and water suddenly
bursts out of the sand at their feet
glad to hear itself summoned at last
fter all these dispassionate theologies.**

**This would normally be the point in the opera
where the soprano gives up the ghost
and the tenor grieves at the top of his tessitura.**

**But someone is coming:
it is the high priest, the bass,
he sings a quiet pretty melody that points out
there is not much music left in grief
that sobbing hasn't sung already.
Decline to die, he urges them.**

**The lovers stand up and embrace,
the high priest sweeps the dead leaves up
into a heap, then takes an armful up
and drops them in a burning basin
then vanishes in greenish smoke.**

**The lovers wonder where the trees are
that left so many dead leaves around them.
But this is opera, the place where fire
does not burn and death is beautiful again.**

**The high priest's voice falls from the sky:
Be one another. Be at peace.**

**Somewhere way down there,
the conductor lays down his funny little stick.**

28 January 2013

=====

e il mare suo

because any place
has its own sea
all round it,
ocean
of earth sang Apollinaire,
oceans of air and wheat and rock—

and there in the middle of the sea
the little island of anywhere

where you stand, always alone,
watching the almost unmoving

around you. Does anything seem
or seem to come towards you?

Anyone out there,
anyone who is not an island?

28 January 2013

=====

vorrei e non vorrei

**Joyce took care of that,
I want and I don't want
and I don't want to do
the thing I want to, true
to every moment every life
I'd rather and rather not.**

28 January 2013

=====

**If a clarinet were an animal
with four legs what would it see?
Slim people slipping through saplings
people not the least
ashamed of themselves or being seen,
leaves let them through, roots
try to trip them up, it's a game
among these slim people always moving—
the clarinet watches closely
with its single darkness and its many eyes.**

28 January 2013

=====

A.

Everybody always wants to be somewhere else.

B.

I haven't been anywhere long enough to notice.

28.I.13

=====

**Here comes the camera
the heart without a head
here comes the tripod
that conquered Kanchenjunga
here comes the finger
that invented history
here comes the glass
that loves assassinations
capitulations firestorms
and naked people caught
in their embarrassment
here come the annals
won't leave us in peace
the dreary records of our
poor excting ordinary lives
here comes memory
with its head on fire.**

28 January 2013

===== [STANZAS TO *LULU*]

1.

So how many have come to watch
so many watching. The anger
is in the white paint, titanium,
the peace is in the red, only red
has the kind of voice you can hear
over the waves. The self-pity
that chisels an island out of a sea.
Be. Be. We're always trying to be.
Says who? The mannequin
in the mind's window. Now spill
the color of a woman on a woman.

2.

It was in another state another climate
and the trees hid their names from me
we played cards but it didn't matter,
people die all the time, we thought,
so what was so special about me
that I could die and come to life again
with dirty fingernails and hungry for
you, whoever you are. Remember
when we were someone else, and you
pale with dark hair, recent escapee
from the harem of a third-rate potentate.

3.

Skip the remembering business, it's all
just ideology anyhow, people trying
to interrupt people trying to make love.
We let ourselves fall in love with the color
of a shadow, the tone-row of her laugh,
more like a giggle and the birds outside
add to the fascination—she feeds the birds—
and the house so dark when we come home
as if no one ever lived here, but still
we come in, sit down, sit there in the dark,
who knows how many others are here too.

4.

Spill now the yellow forefront on the fender
let the cadmium medium of which the literati
are so fond define the forward motion as if
the Volvo were going somewhere O Moon
of us Swamp Children spread out your map
and may it be to us as desire's autobahn
breaking the barrier of civil coherence yes!
let the animals howl their desperate vowel
the one they all know the one we try to copy
when we blab in our fat lips our skinny tongues
what you call a word I call two silent hands.

28 January 2013

