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CORRECTION

Everything I have said to you
must be taken with the first chapter of
The Sacred Fount. Otherwise you'll think
I mean me and you mean you.

An intolerable platitude that would be,
a commonplace, a room full of sleepers.
Things condescend to us just enough.
And then strangely we are free.

3 January 2009

= = = = =

Almost dawn now—
time for you to be becoming
and for me to sleep.

I leave you alone with the world
safe in your hands—two
hours till daylight,

two dark eras for
you to flourish in and
practice and then forget.

3 January 2009

= = = = =

Say more things in mourning
then let the cemetery close,
the word your best friend
couldn't remember in this language

of ours where we hide our loves
beneath the dust, like mad Othellos
never let any crow or jackal nourish
on what we were or soon will be.

Let the earth open up and breathe
and be no mere sepulture
for those tidy engines of the senses
we used to travel with.

4 January 2009

= = = = =

I never get to see how the newspaper gets here
don't know if it fell from the sky so blue
like the plastic bag it lies in or some freckled boy
out of Central Casting flung it there
or a wolf came by and dropped it from its jaws.
Reading the news doesn't give much clue—
more wolf than boy, I guess, more boy than sky.

4 January 2009

[half a sonnet for the *New York Times*]

THE SPOILER

Whenever you look at a bunch of photos
whether in Google Image or your uncle's
leather overflowing snapshot album,
photos of one person, I mean, eventually
you'll come on one image unlike all the rest.
This is where the evil shows, devil's fingerprint,
tragic flaw. Then all the romance
of fantasy and desire, o she could be my love
and he could be my lifelong friend, all that
dissipates. Bad taste in your mouth.
You turn the page. Try to forget the name.

4 January 2009

CLOSER

S, or Z?

Who

can tell from a word
left on the page.

Come near or Come
soon o Closer of the world?

The written spell
the simplest cipher.

4.I.09

FIRST RITUAL

Put the bones in
then the flesh will come
flying in from Night Sky

to hang along collarbones
and slip thick down
arms and hips until
it is your house again.

Squirrel chases squirrel,
buildings fall. Normál
as we say in German,
ready for the knacker's knife

politics of human skin.

Skin.

 We have come so far.
Slaves arriving
every day on the best boats,
Cassandra in the kitchen
howling among casseroles
and of all men on earth
only the hands can understand her poetry.

Because that commodity
was left behind in Aphrica,
our sunny blueland once
now only veins recall.

Or do I member
in this meander
that they call blood?

But what is it really,
this fluidity
sounds like an oboe
sometimes can't
get out of my head
into yours?

Be briefly beautiful,
darling,
a dyslexic striptease
when it takes off it looks like rain
heavy on the outer islands
(palm of hand, socket of the knee)
where historians congrèss
looking for one more antipope.
Friends, sisters, in-betweeners,
all we've *got* is heresy,
it alone in all its furs and fingertips

my god we could do it all again and do it right!

these woods are full of flying squirrels
by night they serve their long negotiation
overhead and out of light
like the whole alphabet hidden inside a written word.

5 January 2009

BUTTES-CHAUMONT

Mention the eagle
when you walk among sparrows.
A bird too big too fear.

You are you again.
You are walking up the lovely stairs
each step made of cement
rustic in the shape of a log, faux-log,
faux-bark, you're in the park,
pretty park and children
pass you unconcerned,
there are ducks in the small pond
on the way to the Mairie.

You're getting married today,
how foolish you are.
Far-off sirens unfamiliar sky,
don't do it, we all still have
reflexes left from the war, alone
is not lonely, don't do it,
you have no experience at it,
this catastrophe by two, you
haven't even married yourself yet
let along some relative stranger,
how could that possibly work?

Come marry me instead,
I'm really you anyhow, it'll be easy
and the I that you are will never leave you.

If you call this love, so be it.
I call it walking across the park
on a mild winter day
worrying about the ducks
and not much else, I call it
lofty conversation with the soul,
eagles and poetry, no fear no hope,
we tread on things made to seem
like other things, this is sort of art,
we rise to easy summits and look round.

This hill was once the garbage dump
for all northeast Paris, then wise men
of the 19th Century heaped earth
on remnant and made it a park,
a 'beauty-spot' they called it then.
On such things we climb, art-wise,
to our proper heaven. Stay here,
leave that stranger waiting at the Mairie.

You are the always of my old hymns,
youngest daughter of language and light.

I have other stuff like this to tell you,
just be me while you move into yourself
slowly, smoothly, your roomy airy
house with huge carved bronze doors.

6 January 2009

PASS

If I make a pass at you
which one of us is the bull
which is the torero
flapping the ridiculous rag
they call after Saint Veronica
who wiped the face of Our Lord
Christ the Mithras-Bull
those Roman soldiers sacrificed
one hot spring day in Palestine.
We always blame Pilate or the Jews
but the soldiers were the ones
who dragged him up the hill
and killed him there, knelt
on his chest to hammer nails in,
like Mithras killing the bull,
Which one is you and which is me?
A troubled land four
thousand years of war,
angry gods unappeased.
And I dare to make a pass
at you – a pass, some
hocus-pocus with a towel
waving in the air, or
the magician gestures

with his tricky finhers
casting a spell on me
to want you or on you to
endure one more day
of unprincipled, unexamined,
meaningless desire.

The poor bull. Even dead
though it is a power,
boukranion, the earliest
emblem of earthly deity,
the horned skull on the altar
is the altar. The bull
makes a pass at the matador's
groin, the girlish killer
sweeps his veil over the horns
all gauze and atmosphere,
gender switch and tangled bull,
to make a pass is to think
that I am you. I am
the animal I kill.

6 January 2009

= = = = =

I am not the one
who dreams my dreams
the dreamer does

and if I try to interfere
dream recitations I would
rather see or hear

the process short-circuits.
The dreamer dreams
I only witness.

Sometimes in the dawn
I try to think about my life
and then the dreamer strikes

and I am in the Story
again, the one that understands
me I do not understand.

7 January 2009

=====

All we can say
is what we don't know.
And when it is said
it remains unknown—
spoken but not shown.

And no man knows where
it is or what it is, a sound
that makes him feel
a certain way there is
no word for either.

7 January 2009

= = = = =

Overcast, among owls
spent life listening
in one ear is all I've
got and out the mouth
to you. Everything to you.

*

When an epic turns into an epitaph
the paper hardens, crummy
graveyard alabaster, easy doing
carve your name and tricks on that
easy for time and the east wind
to wipe you smooth again,
unbaptized rock, name forgot
except by such hands as
carved it maybe.

*

On the left side soft
an oncoming wave—
in this tableau
the sea is performed by my right hand
the rocky shore your flank,

pigeons fluttering around in Greek,
audience vexed
by some memory they can't quite trace
we actors tease by
keeping out of reach.

*

A word comes out of your mouth too—
it is the heart of life
making sound rise
in the hollow places
god help me every
word is an answer.

7 January 2009