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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

its noble forgeries  
keep us plausible, give  
hope to the harried, a chance  
that will not elude the gambler,

o sorry man who has so few kisses.

Here, be different,

luscious,

impenetrably theoretical,

tendentious, beauteous, vague,

just be sure

in every situation

to be wrong,

cut the plausible umbilicus

and don't believe a thing they tell you.

Being wrong is sexual

selection, being wrong

is Darwin on the moon,

a bird sudden to his hand,

his fucking finches

who saved us from heaven.

Being wrong is beautiful and kind.

We do not understand the Law—

all we know is how to break it





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 19<sup>th</sup> 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

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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

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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