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## SQUARE GARDEN

So many things  
remind me to remember  
as if a boat  
brought with it all  
the water it ever touched  
or a cavalier's hand  
still felt all the wounds it made

but there are no swords here  
boats battles. We have salt  
that sifts down from the moon  
when no one's looking

it makes us mad with hopes  
and hope is the enemy of remember.

Stand still. In wet socks  
bankers hurry through new snow  
to their ultimate committee  
when He comes to judge the living and the dead.

Money is rapture. The rich  
you see no more,

only their old shoes  
lying on the thrift shop shelf,

the old woman shuffles through the park  
hoping she'll live to see the lilacs bloom once more

salt in all our eyes, the terribly simple tears.

2.

Sparrows seem to be deciders  
halfway to Jericho forget the Bible  
or hot, a big long white eraser  
for a long book, lo, the Holy Erasure  
is what's left, rapt on spotted page  
a plague of moral words  
ill-cured by the absences themselves.

So there is light. There is a drift  
some snow from left to right  
if I were me or north to south  
if I were Chinese and sat  
before you nibbling my opinions

into four small words  
at a time. Opulent window!  
augment the simplistic light!

More words to rub out.  
Sackbut glee and yeoman's comedo,  
The book of impulses, book  
of formation, same root, make a movie  
of her wanting to do it then doing it

tell them apart, here is the mind  
here is 23<sup>rd</sup> Street on a snowy morning

is that the difference, one park or another,  
one fried egg, a sailboat sinking,  
a furrier late to work?

But what she wants to do comes out of her,  
that's what a *yetzer* is, in impulse an inclination  
to do or taste or take, must be felt  
to be appreciated, stuck in her  
just watching the street where she wants it to happen

when you live in the house of desire  
every impulse is cosmology

everything you do makes a world exist,

she wants it to happen to the light too.  
Numbers are too holy to count with  
we match mink pelts by eye and feel until  
she leaps out of the car and just does it  
among the démodé skyscrapers of midtown  
scattering the pigeons and the kindly furriers.

3.

*She wanted to erase one distinction  
and disclose another.*

*The book  
chattered in the wind: demons  
talk like this.*

*Impulse  
made me, I give into it now  
outward forever.*

*A pronoun I become,  
a simple soul.*

4.

Going too far the keenest lust:  
for crisis, purple  
irises outrageous by the garbage,

lust to do  
what no one can take back,

lust for the irrevocable,  
the pathway of tattoos, excess  
beyond recovery

but the iris has it too  
being purple  
a while and then.

Spectacular cures for spectacular diseases —  
wound of the spectacle, the last crime

of what we see is to make us lust for it,  
lust to join it,  
to enter the Display World  
and play no more.

17 February 2003

## A VEDIC ENCAMPMENT

where the horse is saved.  
Plough, not battle. King,  
not field marshal. A different  
animal of chess,  
a bird you never flew  
to seize a young gazelle  
you never killed. Demure  
victim of a victim,  
we tremble on hillsides  
supposing us in love.  
Mountains are always  
on the edge of sight,  
snow capped all year round.  
This defines the page,  
love is the science of edges,  
here, on smooth swept  
earthen yards  
women and men  
sit on the ground  
around a circle where no one sits.  
An old man dreams about  
snow plows on mountain roads  
you'd think he's asleep, he's not,  
he watches his dream  
out of the corner of his eye.

We call this man the priest  
but he is not that,  
he is committed to our pleasure

so he has no title,

I am his sin. A chessboard  
of flashing lights covers my breastbone  
too. My business is to be looked at,  
touch me if you dare, I won't care,  
you have to figure out every day afresh  
what to do with your fingers,  
thousands of years old, my hair  
reminds you of October grasses  
in another country, a horse fleeing for its life,  
and tame mares led along a dusty road  
by a simpleminded boy  
in love with church bells  
down the streets of your town.

I come to find you  
I sing in your mail box  
come hang out with me  
I am all the India you need.

17 February 2003

## FLOTSAM

The enthusiasm concentrates you  
tempted to communicate you are reading  
the inner mind and the name  
disappeared but it is precisely the origin  
of meaning to return profoundly conservative  
to the resistance movement itself  
disguised as a piece of paper.

But we live in a world without itself,

∴ ξο-β-ομεδ-π∴. so to say so *ngo-wo me-pa*

essenceless and African,

up the Beckett to Sitwell Falls

I want your name on my mailbox,

stymie, I want what's coming to you

cause I suspect you are my essence now

no my essence is two blue jays on one branch

above the snow and now thank god they're gone.

18 February 2003

## THE ULTIMATE DISPARITY IS PARITY

Now out of all this snow  
a blackbird comes, astonished  
by all the resident air life  
thronging these feeders, o arrive  
arrive, nomad animal,  
yellow beak, black character  
winter's pallbearer, come  
a storm too soon.

What century am I, who recognize  
a premature genius on the maple branch,  
come like me from the bare future,  
brother, semaphor from a ship  
lost in the pure horizon, arrive,  
arrive, meaning-bearer, soul-  
feeder, rapture rattling cold feathers,  
wing marks, shadow graph on snow  
to chart your meaning, my time too  
is coming, this will one day be my home.

18 February 2003

## DANCE

Most mortal of what we do  
how frail its purchase on earth  
time, to leave behind just names,  
Nijinski, Salome, maybe  
some old movie footage  
where Isadora's not so different  
from Ginger Rogers, grey  
girlish rhythms in the dark  
and nowhere the body left  
that shaped the time. The left  
body's gone and the right  
body's left, a calculation  
we have to do to seize  
again the missing senses,  
hot sound of his dancing,  
or what her body did to emptiness.

19 February 2003

## MARGINS

*(drawn from Brakhage's "Playing the Stars" in **Telling Time**)*

1.

Not ever the movies  
my angers  
in default to thought  
innate to stand art  
the first shifting  
watched night-watchers  
passing the gods

and a door did.

Form contrived  
reducing the future  
lines on the palm of the sky.

2.

Variations  
as aesthetic score  
thrill advertising  
always saleable  
Dramatic Infinite  
still infinite  
father reading from star.  
Nature is medium  
inherent for those

the movies used to stifle.

This accusation is just.

3.

Thought reversed to affection

expect much who is in it

and who stand the particular.

We know the first, chronicled

passing, son of the gods

a narrative beginning.

Then there were types over the future,

proportions available to sin.

19 February 2003

## AQUARIUS

Iron bar. Scarlet yarn. White  
shavings of basswood or balsa

knotted in. The bar transverse  
iron horizon. What hangs down

from sky festooned with yarn  
the yarn prickles with splinters

with white wood. Iron scarlet.  
Horizon broken in the yard.

Own ownership a bar of iron  
knotted in the *fixed air* above the yard.

White yarn festooned with wood.  
Where does the wood come in

how does the bar stay in mid air.  
The air is thick with local gravity.

What is a thing when it is its own.  
What owns it then. Element iron.

Or color. Or where. Where a thing is put.  
The yarn supports iron, iron bears color,

color bears wood, wood hangs down.  
A cross is so close to the ground.

In the cellar of the sky the iron sleeps  
any night and wakes with fresh wood

white and thin and owned by the yarn  
that holds the iron only to itself

iron color broken white horizon  
bar in yard yard festooned with sky

wood sleeps too and wake away  
and only the bar knows how to stay.

20 February 2003

## PARANOIA

It is a hard mystery  
a bird on a branch  
a soft mystery  
a branch beneath a bird  
but my kind of detective  
can't even figure out that

let alone who drowned King Ludwig  
shot Kennedy shot King. "Follow  
the money," he said but where  
does money live at night?  
The conspiracy is just things  
whispering together against me,

sharing their breath against us.  
Who profited from Auschwitz,  
why were those rail lines never bombed,  
who is the National Debt owned *to*?  
(That one I know: poor Americans  
owe trillions to rich Americans.)

But I don't know the answers,  
all I know is that the questions hurt.  
So I revert to the bird,  
a mourning dove now down on the snow  
hobbling among the fallen seed.  
Other animals arrive. They seem  
to know what they're doing, why don't I?

20 February 2003

## WORD CLING

A blue havildar  
in a dead regiment  
such dignity in titles  
lasts longer than the man

nobody likes men anyway  
lasts longer than color  
colors fade, a blue  
havildar in a lost company

a man you might have liked  
for the sake of what he did  
but what did he do  
he told you what to do

the title lasts beyond the function  
name on a tombstone  
too old too cold to feel  
a thing that's left

when feeling's gone  
blue havildar lost army dead raj.

20 February 2003

Es war einmal mitten im Winter, und die Schneeflocken fielen wie Federn vom Himmel herab, da sass eine Koenigin am einen Fenster, das einen Rahmen von schwarzen Ebenholz hatte, und naechte. Und wie sie so naechte und nach dem Schnee aufblickte, stach sie sich mit der Nadel in den Finger, und es fielen drei Tropfen Blut in den Schnee. Und weil das Rote im weissen Schnee so schoen aussah, dachte sie bei sich 'haett ich ein Kind so weiss wie Schnee, so rot wie Blut, und so schwarz wie das Holz an dem Rahmen.' Bald darauf bekam sie ein Toechterlein... (*Schneewittchen*-- die Brueder Grimm)

## WRAPPING THE SKY

airs how the sky works everybody knows what everybody knows they give us nothing to think with, or the wrong things, so we can't think, or think wrong (i.e., conspiracy theory), it doesn't matter what we think, it's what we buy that counts it doesn't matter what we think, it's how we feel about ourselves while we're thinking. radical chic: how to feel good about yourself while everything's falling apart, they are captives, captives of our eyes on the runway, we are captives of their moves, the silk of their pretenses wraps us, we smother in the love-smell of radical cosmetics, the warm of professional thin women, the cold of fashion mavens sneering down their leather lapels, they are captives of our purses, our inclinations, we trap each other in mortal embrace, lust me to the bank, cash my sperm, the sense of people captured by fashions, falsities, media, chic, actual sinister governments and institutions. Captives. Vaneigem. Debord. They were here a while before me.

21 February 2003

*Word forms trickled into the folds of her listening.* — Barbara Leon

## THE MOTORBOAT BOYS

It's not enough to glow a lot or tell  
the till is empty, the Motorboat Boys again  
on their way to Mecca, the midshipman  
zonked on actual opium for toothache,  
didn't work, where do they come by it,  
kids say the darkest things, a palooka like you  
has no business in arts administration.  
Drunk, drunk, drunk. Arles soaks in  
debauched sunlight typical of Roman poetry  
a walnut shell carved to look like Colosseum.  
We have to do more than that  
**letme go** for instance, in an alphabet  
bad girls locked in Reform School devised  
for billets-doux to local congresswomen  
Get me out of anywhere, Let me be  
the pluperfect subjunctive of the verb 'to be.'  
Anywhere you could call here. Here  
is terrible. You've read this book before  
in childhood terror and you know too well  
how these characters turn out. And then  
you know they all turned into you. Quiet,  
taxman, this money is still mine till April.

21 February 2003

## **BLESSED ARE THE MEEK**

One thing makes the wagon roll.  
The Hasdrubal Relief Association  
sends mean letters to the papers,  
especially the *Corriere della Sera*,  
forget all the history you ever knew  
the baldacchino over St Peter's altar  
trapped all the sunlight from outside  
permanent change in Roman weather.  
No messages for me. A sparrow  
knocks another silly, accident, one flew  
the other veered into a window  
both survive. Even tragedy is hard  
to come by in a Friday world.  
But once Baron Saturday starts his stroll,  
aieeee! as the comic books used to represent  
non-white hostile personnel declaiming  
as they swiped their krisses through  
our blue-eyed guys. Now all our enemies  
are just aliens, with no P.R. men of their own.

21 February 2003

## AGITATION, ANYBODY?

My aunt though Welsh by marriage had French doors.  
Infant perplexities have not resolved themselves in me,  
everything is still weird. We crept along the zoo drive  
across from the thirty foot plaster Dachshund  
offering hot dogs in the Pacific fog with a smile.  
So weird, everything, still. I'm at sea a lot of the time.  
Why olives in martinis? Why gas logs in real brick  
fireplaces? Why is suicide called the Dutch Act  
when the only people known to perform it  
are Irish-American women whose husbands have left them  
for eager-lipped Italian girls? Words go one way  
and things another, hold onto the words with a wistful  
little smile and eventually they'll give you something to eat.  
Paper plate potato salad Sunday suppers orange light.  
Evidently assent has some role to play, and getting past  
the stories I tell myself constantly inside, and enduring  
the appalling tedium of adult conversations on real estate,  
furniture, misbehaving relatives, and clothes. I too  
tried to kill myself once or twice, wasn't good at it,  
not one of my special gifts, leave it to those who know  
the difference between giving up and giving in.  
It would be years before the narrow heaven-seeking  
row houses of Amsterdam explained more than even they  
were meant to tell, all that skeptical philosophy, reach up,  
reach up, take your place in the patient fact of earth  
and hold your breath until your brick turns old and plum.  
Then when I looked up the word for 'love' in Hungarian

the dictionary gave me what it means in tennis,  
that zero invented they tell me by the Arabs, something  
that makes computation possible involving very  
large sums, possible though scarcely fun, something  
connected with deserts and (where had I heard that  
before) being content with silence and being alone.

21 February 2003