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EXAMINE YOUR MOTIVES

I

if you're willing to stay home all the time.

Otherwise go out and taste the water

hidden in the moving air, fire seeds tucked

deep in earth, be hurt and be complete.

2.

There's no pleasure keener than analysis,

ever-shifting clinamen, the choice I want to choose

to stand in your shoes or on the wall of China

looking down on all your Mongols, your frightened Mandarins.

3.

But cultivate the obvious if you would hide —

nobody analyzes drunks. Or are linguists

of a certain sort hanging even as I speak

on the numb lips of a plastered raconteur,

4.

Inebriate Discourse the monograph in mind?

I still think you're safest in broad daylight

across the street and down the block from narrow night

— every cliché finally leads straight to the truth

5.

but what kind of place will truth turn out to be?

POTHOS

Blundering gerunds
print dresses under stars and stripes
Childe Hassam on Fifth Avenue
heliotrope on the Isle of Shoals,
what color's time?

Of course to clear away the old,
that what pain is for,
relieve the mechanism,
oil of yearning,

yearning, not believing
you said, a code
prohibits contact,
why bother having
what you long for
when longing lasts
far longer than fulfillment,
this old hag who used
to be the hatter's pretty wife.

But trying
benefits the soul
we don't believe in,
the blue music of dusky vistas
of all the lostness ever was,
dahin, dahin, the way Thomas Wolfe
took Goethe's longing as a cry of loss.

Because as you say
why long for what you can have
just take it

but what madman would dare
to take in hand what his heart happened on?

2 August 2003

Eccentricities of alphabet
a little no-see-em
has flown into my left ear
now all the monsters in R'lyeh
whisper from my sleep.
Wake into this sprightly insect world,
Godiva canters past
pinkly on her pillion.

2 August 2003

CABINETRY

Everybody has opinions about toilet paper.
Parsimonious, demonstrative, efficient,
exuberant the ways they use it,
with passionate view about whether the loose
end should flop down in front or behind.
And the strange boy who used a whole roll every day.

2 August 2003

Being so close to it
feeling it, right there
like a fruit fly caught
in the soft hairs
on the back of my hand
so close
a future
with you in it
the whole light
is a spider web
morning tremble

3 August 2003

TAHITI

What we call Tahiti is the remnant of the City of the God Thoth, once the great capital city of Gondwanaland. This is millions of years ago, understand, and it's not clear what we looked like then, when we rode in silent carriages along the broad boulevards of Tēhuti. The island we know was parkland at the ancient city's rim, an arm of which reached in close to the city center, where there stood, seven thousand feet tall, a colossal statue of the God sheathed in orichalch, a monument which was at the same time the seat of government, a building of a hundred thousand rooms.

3 August 2003

PEOPLE

Some people get weak names
others get old

some other people come from warm countries
and are glad to be here
but also glad to go back
others less so
others likewise from cooler
so many are the same

when they have their names
they move around sooner or later
and talk to one another
there are exceptions
when they're not sure
others stand still
staring into the street is helpful
some stay by windows
others swear by doors

with better names they can choose
and eat for example tomatoes and avocados
and later mangoes
so many things come from trees
it surprises many how good food comes from wood

and some won't eat butter
but will drink tea
others as soon as they wake
drink three glasses of tap water for their health
carefully counting
while others think one of anything is plenty.

3 August 2003

IN A SHOE

What about people who live in a shoe
every morning they wake up somewhere else
stomping up Broadway or stumbling
on the rocky coasts of Donegal
and all their children sniveling in Gaelic
today and Dutch tomorrow and no wonder
they and she and I and you don't know what to do.

3 August 2003

MINOAN

I only smile when I'm telling the truth.
Not because the truth usually hurts
and I'm trying to break it to you gently,
so, I'm just too dumb to lie and smile at once.

3 August 2003

COMMITTEE

All the people at this long hard table
are daydreaming fast as they can
except for the one who's actually talking

and even that one has some urgent friend in mind
flickering in and out of focus as the words ooze out

All the people are fantasizing, countries and carriages,
nude enthusiasts through their consciousnesses
while the weary work of deciding nothing goes on

I wish a merciful God just once would let us see
what every one of us is thinking right now

out loud, tumultuous hologram of over-reality
flashing and fondling all round us, the privileged world
inside the world, the phony truth inside the actual lie.

3 August 2003

KAIROS

Close already to the line
where saying stops and going knows

It is a mountain
close but out of sight

implies a seer, a martyr
to its mass, something

happens to the sky.

4 August 2003

Start a new entablature
to stitch the sky
to the building below
or the same
thing happens to music.

4 August 2003

EDUCATION

There used to be books with titles like “How to Listen to Music” or “What to Listen To in Music.” Now we need books like *How to Listen To People Talking About Music*, or *What Can Be Said About Music*. Is this fiction or philosophy? What is the difference anyway? Is it a chemical or a neurosis? We can’t blame a language for what people say in it. Can we? A gun is always a tort or a felony waiting to happen. Sue the rifle-makers. Sue the dictionary.

4 August 2003

LOVE SONG

Could you be who I think I am?

Noble ryder, pack of cards,

smiling nervous in strong facial planes,

Gypsies built your face from chicken bones.

4 August 2003

MYSTERIOUS QUATRIN DRAGON SOFTWARE HEARD ME SAY

Award-winning school
until one or before

the move was solidly fathomable
Grove will be recorded in the snow

4 August 2003