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SCIENTIST

Throwing yourself into the fog of the day
we know so little of one another's chemicals,
circuitry of desire, tides of fulfillment

shouldn't this be friendship also and a mango shared,
sweetness passed from hand to hand
till both of us are wet and slaked and have one taste?

I speak of fruit but I mean meat, the stopwatch
in the clothes, the urgent animal inside
who reads the subtlest signals in the streets and trees.

I want to know your machine. What turns you
towards *yourself in the other*, what touch or telling
operates the jungle where you prowl.

When the most delicate shiver of desire saunters
deep inside your paradise, what have you just seen
or thought or felt? My breath on your nape forever?

3 August 2002

A ROSE ON ITS WAY TO BECOMING A FOX

Are you looking out
the other side of the window yet?

It's hard to learn the absolute from windows,
you have to look through in both directions
and do it at once. Memory
and other cameras help you here,
the permanent movie in which you're installed.

Everybody has a bit part in everything else.

Then the work of windows starts.
Knowing out and how to get back.

A window is a round trip,
shock therapy, a devil's door.
A window is desire.
Have you ever seen a boring window?

Never. It all comes in.
It winds the eye in on its sly beam,
it holds us to the void
in which we see whatever we think we see,

the wanton object
lost from the beginning of our lives
suddenly found

you think
and then the wind blows, window goes
blank and you begin again.

Wind eye

they say
it said
when it was young

when there was someone
outside always
to volunteer
looking in,

the invisible voyeur
that keeps us sane,
Holy Spirit she is and phallus eye,

a window is the sex of light.

In traditional Mirsuvian painting, from frescoes to manuscript illuminations, there is a pervasive taboo against the representation of windows. Walls if shown are unpierced, usually extensive, covered with pictures and tapestries and trophies of the chase. Here and there in the middle distance some heavy drapery might hang almost to the floor, the drapes seem to move in a draught of wind, hinting salaciously of a window, an open window no less, hidden behind. The wind is articulated in the cloth, somewhat in the way a maiden's breast might be hidden and suggested at once in Victorian paintings, a hint of touch behind the heavy gabardine.

Scholars explain this reticence by recalling that the nomadic ancestors of the Mirsuvians lived in windowless *g'rs*, conical tents of woolen felt, as they wandered the steppe. In such contrivances, the only light came from a smoke hole at the top, at once too sordid (smoke and fetor pass out)

and too sacred (Oranlis the sky god looks in) to be represented with decency. It is supposed that shame felt about the smoke hole came to apply by a natural extension of function to the windows in the highly civilized buildings of the later urban Mirsuvians.

Darling, can I look in your window.

Only if you look out again.

What do you see when you look in?

I see a room vanquished by its furniture,
a chest of drawers climbing to attack heaven,
a cat narcotized by broadloom
but I don't see you.

How could you,
I'm here beside you, our elbows touching —
or does it mean that because I'm blind
I'm invisible too?

If you climb in
you'll be the one I see
and then you'll see again through me.

It is said: someone all alone is blind.

Window, proclaim our precious solitude
and at the same time abrogate it.

A window is a kind of onanism,
the light penetrates but does not propagate,
around the whole outside
a window wraps its arms.

The sky is made of porcelain,
it rained for us last night
and made the windows wet,
the locust trees are turning brown,

what if there is no answer?
Sometimes just asking the question again
feels as good as an answer.

And what do you see when you look out?
an old leather sack hanging from a fallen lath,
a bonsai beaded with light,
a withered rose gleaming with dew
halfway on its way to turning into a fox
under the machinations of the dawn.

3 August 2002

THE GROUP PORTRAIT

I need to know what this celebration means,
a hundred people gathered on a sloping lawn,
my own broad white face among them
and yours in front of me, half hidden, half
a smile that seems to be the innocence of earth.
The rest are mildly smiling too, and I should feel
the same affection for them all I feel for you.
But each one I recognize at all stirs deep in me
such somber fussy specifying, tractates
of demurral or distaste, such unsigned letters
guessing at betrayals, such ordinary
reasonable doubt. How can I be in the middle
of such a throng and love them so little.
Except that one, our teacher seated in a lower row,
the one who brings us all together. If I don't love
them, how can I love him, really, since they
are his chosen students, porters of his work
out in the world. They are the image
of his teaching, living, smilingly awkwardly
in sunlight on a little hill. From these,
something will come. Him and you I love
and what is to become of me, who love
so much and so few, who have made
to little of that love inside myself,
the only one not smiling in this world.

4 August 2002

Stadt meiner Träume

I found it then,
the old emperor's little city
at the end of the prairie,

a decent talkative place
with one cathedral
with no fountains

a fair number of drunks
every morning stumbling
through the hordes

workers on the way.
This dingy city
used to rule my mind.

4 August 2002

PETERPLATZ

A city where I bought you amber.
Where there were camels and giraffes
in the zoo I didn't visit
and a famous river I didn't swim.
Where there were churches I never entered
and music to which I did not dance
down below the earth, down narrow stone steps
where I babbled to Gypsies in nobody's language
because talk is easy if I have nothing to say,
meaningless, I am the lord of poetry.
On the way home I kissed the opera house
in love with that obvious music
then took the trolley to the end of the line,
this is not my home but I felt close to it,
close enough to turn away as all my life
I turned from what is mine
and rode back to the middle of some glory town
and lay down in my very narrow bed
till church bells woke me, and horses
clattering down there, I was afraid to look out
afraid to see the empty coach waiting for me.

4 August 2002

SHOPPING LIST

I don't need apologies	I need flour
I need better treatment	to make a cake
from you,	to hide beneath a stone
you may be the floor	to feed the demons
I stand on	who love me
and the moon	from the sky —
I gaze up at forever	they know
and everything I love between,	where earth
but there's no person	is buried in earth
in our presence	they know

where silver air itself
hides itself inside the common air

~~feed devils mushrooms and honey and cakes~~
~~they need the sweet inside true sulfur~~
~~they need blue rain~~

Water is dissolved rock.

Fire is a quick forgetting.

Now I have told you everything I know.

Old fountain with a broken rim

a young woman sitting on it studies sun's reflections in

this midday art, ripples

in the pool run through her too

everything continues us
she thinks she remembers a man saying
while he passed the time of day with her
once and fondled her soft hand

and nothing stops, he went away
but nothing stops, there is no wall,

I watch her from my traveling window.

Thirsty by the fountain
we live all our lives.

4 August 2002

THE IRRITABLE TRAVELER

Having called Aix-les-Bains and having
confused the whole film crew about salmon
I decided to come home, skipping opera
for a change but you were there before me
mad as hell I mean as usual, some friend,
I fear I am the poppet for your voodoo pins
when all I ever mean is to make you mine
and things that are mine are safe in my closet
crimson with passion covered with dust.

A peach between her legs I wrote
and then *A mirror remembers*, and remember
a mirror is just a conspiracy of knives
for a moment uneasily at rest. It was raining.

The pretty chestnut haired woman wept
urgently on the terrace by the lake
and kept trying to convince her lover
of something while the fluffy huge
Austrian swans kept cruising past,
I keep remembering. Can't you ever
remember America? I don't have to,
I am her, and here we are, forever almost,
fashionably late, my expensive little car
seen parked in your driveway at dawn
to scandalize the neighbors, metafuck
in public, a blue eye looks down
on every continent, size of the sky we
are never alone. You're actually right,
I should have more to say about Dakota
or my home town. But it keeps changing

whenever I go outside, it's like a museum
every exit brings you back to now.
And now is never give. Now must be won.
Sorry to turn serious. It's a disease
like syphilis I picked up along the way.

5 August 2002

A PENITENT

Say nothing rash about the moon,
there are no horses any more —
but this much I wanted to include:
this dry summer all the locust trees
are turning brown, the same ones
that last year blossomed white
flowers fantastically for weeks on end
as they never had before in forty years.
As if they flourished once before they died
as Hegel said, and this is dying.
And Hegel doesn't say what happens then.

I remain the name of a disease
that afflicts us both, I'm tired of the way
you talk to me, talk to me again
as if I were a stranger and you cared.
I'm sick of the hand-carved answers,
all that's left of those sumptuous peaches
whose kernels I keep whittling.

Dim liturgies of memory
chanted in a weird language,
one that humans actually speak
somewhere over the Urals, where a mint
green mountain lake is hidden
splashing with the antics of yogurt eaters.

I remember nothing. The dream
is continuous. You will never

forgive me. I will never learn to care.
We are betrayed by doors, absolved
by windows but don't know what they mean
with all their penetrations, their pale
permissions in the darkest wall.

I keep myself going the way you do,
tiny victories among colossal loss,
risk turns into energy turns into you.

We carry the sign with us, word
and image on it keep changing,
we can no longer read what we have made,
we carry it forever, in bad neighborhoods
down innocent highways until by chance
we meet someone who can tell us
approximately what it was we said.

5 August 2002

See what happens to the girl in the end.
We always need someone, see who it is
at her door.

The last door,
the one the owl died in front of,
the one the lion left alone that time
when wild animals walked in the city
after I forget what catastrophe or war

and there they were and she was safe,
I don't know how, something about her
sweetness wrapped in anger.

What does she think of
when she thinks of me?
her young officer with easy horses,
furloughs in soft mountains,
old money we somehow shared?

It all pretended. We worlded
and then I was gone,
my nature
to perpend
commitment, hers to depend

on an entity in those days she called me.

But that is her own clear true self
alwaysyer than me. I am embarrassed
by the diligence of her desire. She solid,
me laminate.

She right now, me half
gone to tomorrow, a place the other side of hell.

6 August 2002

AVATAR

It was on the other hand superb of me
to let the messenger go. You wouldn't have.
You would have locked him in your cellars
until God sent another angel to rebuke you

and then there would have been war, pestilence,
rhetoric, a new religion, bottomless calamities.
I let him go. I kept the sense of his message
as long as I could — forgetting comes easy

in these latitudes. But for an afternoon or two
I knew the meaning of all things. I was Proclus.
Then I was Avicenna. I haven't been anybody
for a long time but at least I let him go.

You held yours when he came, and he rotted there
until the meaning he had brought was turned
into something worse than emptiness itself.
What is the opposite of religion? To do things

because someone tells you to. That's you,
even if the one who tells you is also you,
you are stuck in yourself like a bone in meat.
Someday I will be somebody again and then

I'll come to your big church and set you free.

6 August 2002

I'm not guilty

I am clean desire

my tee-shirt is intact

and has no print on it

I admit nothing

and wash off every day

the stains of contact

so why do you look

at me like that

you who are speciated

by my Darwinian

attentions to make

something come of this?

You are particular

I am general

I am in charge

of this encounter

I want you to see me

as I see you all

opportunity

all travel in far

places and subtle

pain big

interesting risks

I am no worse

than you think you are

I will make

everything change.

7 August 2002

