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ENGFÜHRUNG AUS DEM SERAIL

The signature sings
at the foot of the letter

listen it is from me
all my favorite noises
slip into your lap

see a foreigner I am
after all these roses

6 November 2001

Parody? Or plain
desire's sense?
You'll never know.

Everything answers
Is my answer.
Everything asks
Is my love song.

6 November 2001

So suppose in an empty room
a few fading lilies unusually yellow
stood in a blue vase, cobalt, what then?

Do you see her now, scuffling through leaves or
barefoot at the brink of the bed? How clear
does the picture have to be, oatmeal, band-aid,

blender with shot motor, serrated carving knife?
Suppose you said an answer and I said yes,
would that be true? Greeks had a simple word

for false but a compound word for true.
English says I lie but no simple
verb that says I am telling you the truth.

Allow it's not such an easy thing to do.
She has so many names, for instance,
each instance of her utterly accurate.

Only in dreamless sleep can we be certain
who she really is, namely, no one.
Because I am also the only lie she speaks.

We have been dreaming each other's dreams for years.

6 November 2001

Adolescent auto.

This is me.

Cum stains on the steering wheel, I ask you.
How can such things be?

Travel

has a probity of its own, that amber blend
of geography and fear and sheer bad luck

it takes to get there. The lucky ones stay home.

6 November 2001

The current is meaning

Enough

I have learned how to write

To ride

7 November 2001

AUTUMN

Or some old men with their sister
alone on the porch with the moon
is that what anything means

or slept too late to understand
what it meant to want
something unfolding no longer outside

but close enough to the door to feel
the breezy conversation of the street
isn't that eternity enough

a clock's hands caressing Henry James

2.

Sometimes I am tired of being everybody
and want to repair to a plain house
and walk around my yard with a plain face
worrying about next spring's lawn

until I forget all the people I'm not
and want to become again

look, I take your language in my mouth.

7 November 2001

Sauntering by easel light
a sad sumptuous now-you-know

her identity is how you feel
looking at the black core of her eye

the one that language says is my child
could we be married more wonderful

beyond the words the intricate texts
the special doubts that jukeboxes

used to analyze (full heart empty arms)
unpunctuated by mere happenstance of bliss?

8 November 2001

embarrass the moment
with a whistle

but where

do you put your lips
to the wind

and then?

is it something sings
up through them
the bones
made to whisper

north to where
they think they hear?

but hearing
is always hear
the heart
(he thumped on his

to illustrate
the simultaneity

of source and destination)

9 November 2001

Edge is near middle

touches in the heart

I translate navel

rim hub hoop

and everything center

9 November 2001

Media means means or middles

The girl in Latvia her flower
rebukes the royal bomber

to be in the house of crime but not taste a morsel of that sly food

a dollar of course

it is not a quadrille from which
anyone can extricate himself

lawyers and brokers rain down on the desert

a jungle made of sunlight and wind alone

and those who want to think about it
have no material for thinking

believe the pretty pictures or.

9 November 2001

Initiate splendor instead.

Unforgiving imagery

Identity

Saltarelle — the womanless peace of the Dioskouroi
stepping over the rooftops
a gleam above small city

like autumn moonrise
but the moon is already risen

and the light has faces in it
and a voice

 one speaks and the other's silent
but they say the same thing.

9 November 2001

LEAVEWELL

I am nobody you remember
suddenly
I am somebody you never knew

bottles of wine on my window sill
drunken sunshine stumbling through
and only I am sober

only the one you never knew.

9 November 2001

FINDING A WAY TO IT

After all the friends have had their say
the rooms rearrange themselves by night

of course everything is a God I love you
as the gum machine said to the finger

as the nickel said to the antique wall phone
call me when you can I am your mother

even though I look like the boy delivering pizza
you turned the clock upside down on the marble mantle

to confuse the black angels who think time is a stone.
leave a few pieces of the crust for me

you don't like it anyway, all chew and no cheese,
pray for me in your blue glass votive lamp

pray for me with your butterfly wings
your frozen custard machines your beaches

and especially your swollen tonsils, I'm tired
of making lists, you do it, tell me what I need.

11 November 2001

By a fateful hour
blend of caucuses
a vote for Lydia

where gold rolls down rivers
and they hold their rabbits
solemnly asleep on laps

light up my eyes
the curvature of space
body relates

as the sound to the sound board
into the dark bathroom
bent forward washing her

hands is spoken

12 November 2001

What touches the tree to be about me?
Aren't most people really about themselves

the way kids pedal tin cars up the hallways
in old home movies, plaster panel walls in the Bronx

electric candles drip phony wax in sconces.
It's all about time when it's not all about sex.

Bach for instance, those heterosexual English Suites
surprising teenagers screwing around in the rec room

before we all died or moved to one room apartments.
Even so copulation kept thriving, as Lear complained

— morality is the last pornography of old men.
So examining these dead leaves carefully I deduce

there was once a thing called science and a tree
came up out of the ground and cast a gently moving shadow

standing by itself like a Guernsey cow amber brown
because time pisses on all of us, these golden showers.

13 November 2001

AGGRIEVED BY THE ACT ITSELF

Blue disciplines scissor the back door
Forgive my passion it's only a little war
Between the swallow and the acid reflux
We always taste what we swallowed last
A tenor howling love songs to the iron moon

O sit there in front of me like a svelte
Clam shell on the shores of Lake Orgasmo
Across the room I can hear your body think.

13 November 2001

Why it wants so much what scares it so.
Excuse us, the canary has gone to the movies

we're alone in the apartment can I touch you
I mean when I touch you what do you think

exactly if think is the word for such a blue scream.
And I feel you moving in me too.

13 November 2001

A climate by water
a signature you hold
my hand
instructing the letters
I am too tired not to write

like a sheet fluttering on the line
an owl arrives.

13 November 2001

Most of me is close to you still
and here is a city
we are not allowed to forget

are we? Wine. Wine the same as you.

Thinking of you I hear the shiver of my vows
cold night and glass

is it one more tiny earthquake or did you suddenly think of me?

13 November 2001

FAUST ET MOI

I was always young. It needed no transformation music, pretty as it is, for me to seem so again. My beard and fusty robes sprang away from me the way leaves rush from a lawn, cleaned away by an invisible wind.

“To seem so again.” To seem to myself young, and seem so to you. To her.

I was the devil I sold myself to.

And Germany is calling again.

Faustus = *favustus* = fortunate, favored, favored by fate.

Faust = fist.

Which do I mean, my force or my fate? Am I agent or am I angel'd?

Spoused fun. Faust pun. He needs a wife I need a wife. What's true for him truer for me. Comparative of bliss.

He goes from woman to woman, not out of licentiousness but to seek the perfect wife. No matter how many he has. Marriage is no obstacle to married bliss. Find her, whoever she is. Whoever I seem to be.

Marguerite = *margarita*, 'pearl.' A string of pearls.

One after another.

Because he is a perfect husband he must marry everyone he meets. Or at least everyone who seems as if she might be the perfect wife.

His desire is the fire in which they're both to be refined. Defined. They are transformed by what he wants. A hoax, like the hoax of poetry.

This is not adultery but its opposite.

This is not infidelity. It is a pilgrimage of faith itself.

Faith in the perfectibility of person, in the perfectibility of relationship.

Adultery, adultery is settling for imperfection. Settling. It is as when we say of a substance that is not purely itself, it has been adulterated. Something is adulterated when it is not utterly true to itself.

So wrote Faust. (Take this out later so the reader can't tell me from him. From her.)

I am a bottle, dark green glass, barely translucent but translucent.

In me is a message carefully and neatly written, on sturdy paper with a decent ink, screwed tight and stuffed inside.

My name, personality, history and so on — all those are just the cork snugged into the mouth of this bottle.

The message is intact inside. I am in the sea.

I wait for you, wave. I wait for you, shore. I wait for you, hand.

Certainty was never my business. A puff of smoke, greenish, from my chalice. A few dead leaves, scarlet symmetries. Enough to go on. Guess.

She knew she was in trouble when she felt his eyes all over her, her body, not just the face, not just the glances that smooched along her cheeks to linger on her lips. Lips open, moving. To speak. His eyes were on her body. Body: midriff, loins, nape of neck, socket of knee, small of back, hollow of throat, curve of belly, chute de reins. She knew she was in trouble when she could feel him reading her skin, her shallow breaths, her cautious smile.

He stole her feelings. Shanghaied them into his huge complicated design where he worked them in, her feelings, so important to him, as if he had none of his own.

His phantom city he built around her. Live in me, he seemed to be saying. But he had no in.

She knew she was in trouble but knew he was in worse trouble. A perfectionist has no peace, ever.

He was a pilgrim through a world not yet finished. Never finished. He was to go on forever. He called that living, sometimes he called that loving.

She was afraid of him, so she took him in her arms. Maybe so close to her he could not hurt her.

She could see him: he studied her the way a blind man faces the rising sun.

How (she thought), how does what he sees have anything to do with me?

Open me, open me and read! He would say things like that, and no god, no devil, could say what he meant by such jargon.

The language of enthusiasm is always inexact. If one truly knew the thing one wanted, one would not go on wanting it, since want is consciousness of deprivation, and knowing is consciousness of possession.

Enthusiasm speaks from deprivation, approximates, yearns.

The shadow adds dimension to the man. She studies it in turn, trying to know the thing he makes happen, the thing of which he cannot be fully aware.

No man knows his whole shadow, she said, and he thought her clever for saying it. It made him more determined to possess her. Or not so much possess her, as possess that power which simultaneously summons, appropriates and dismisses all such images into and from the niche in the world, in the mind, that she presently occupied. Her amber yellow hair.

14 November 2001