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CREPUSCULE DU JOUR

Being at the necessary place
Like a tree

In the rain
A tree

The way a tree is
poem
Sloping towards the afternoon
Along the subjunctive of the light itself

Fading into uncertainty

The way I love.

This is an essay called *Reading by Twilight*

I am still considering quietly
Who I must become
To write it.

Because no one writes in his own voice, never,
Language is everybody's
And what it says
Comes from every mouth to every ear

And what we call style, Anatole, is only the stink of me.

That beautiful redolence
For which we study and love and kill.

And who should I say I am now
When I say I love someone and mean it?

26 November 2000

it is the way the rain drops
have colonized the gaunt
twigs of the bare spiraea

each drop depending
at a decent distance
from another

the neighborliness
of gravity
the gleam of each

individual secure
a moment's koh-i-noor
in the empire of light.

26 November 2000

Or it could go this way
a star beset by shimmer
its unaccountable
attractiveness to which we tend

mercifully shortlived or else forever
we would be worshipping
a vanished splendor.
Look down, daughter,
the earthlight means us.

26 November 2000

Because no one knows what she's thinking
One gets a reputation for ignorance
Whenas in fact (in silk) there is no
Knowing. None. No one. Knows
What she is thinking.

The ignorance of design
Extends to the last breath.

I am trying to say
(I won't let myself say) that I do not know
and want to know what you are thinking.

The silence is killing me. The only fatal
Animal is to say nothing. My appetite
Is killing me too. That ghost of old desires
Panting in my ear. Your ear. Yearning
For the distant interiors of the closest skin.

For words beyond any words I've ever
Managed to say. In other words
For the future. In other words for you.

26 November 2000

Reading her pulse at a nearby table
One brunette does another
And the man talks. One rubs
With her thumb Two's wrist
Who's listening to Three.

And Four over here, ol' me
At our own table
Can feel the currents, *qi*,
Prana, energeia, rampant
Down the allure of arm
Pervading the soft meat

A message from the soul
Immensely even terribly
Desperately far away.

26 November 2000
Woodstock

SILENCE IN FALCARRAGH

Silence in Falcarragh
Was what the night made,
No moon, and the mountain.

It was dark as God meant
The heart to be, not a glimmer,
Trust your feet, trust nothing.

You're on your own at last
With gorse bushes beside the road
To stab you if you waver

And the sheep complain beyond the gorse
And the easy dog beyond the sheep,
You're on your own to feel your way

So learn to do that every day,
Walk through the bright market too
With your eyes closed and be

Close you are to your own house now
The darker dark up there ahead
That might be the old thing you mean.

27 November 2000

AU ROI CACHÉ

The hidden ruler
who measures the world

his stick stretched out
along us

lord measure this body
into her mind lord

measure her meaning
into my heart lord

these absurd words
ceiling, floor, dog, word,

love, who, me.
The hidden monarch

beneath the obvious.

27 November 2000

ZONES OF A NON-LINEAR DISCOURSE on the RED SEAL

Non-linear because I want to draw you into the circle of reflection and consideration and trial and error of this process I've been working on for several months now.

1
RED SEAL
red seal records
re/a/d seal

seals of Donegal
a seal in Galway harbor

2.
COMPOSITION IS RESEARCH

3.
caves of the Dordogne and the Pyrenees
are topological extensions of our minds
brains calvaria
where we find scratched on the wall
ONLY what we are prepared to read
The decipherments of rock scratches
Sobin, Eshleman et al.

4.
read the impressions on the mind
read the fissures folds
for the brain also is a process of creases and folds
cerebral cortex cork rind of our tree
to write on bark
beech bark smooth beech = *Buche* = buch

5.
to make the mind disgorge
its buried darknesses

to make the dark speak
without trying to turn it
into the presumptuous light

like honoring the dream
by dreaming it

by carrying it around by day
by reading/re-reading it

not by interpretation

but by dwelling with

because reading a book is dreaming someone else's

I mean to enter the caves — whether Lascaux or language — and come out with a decent dark thing, a word or poem,
That does not presume to interpret what was found down in there

But is itself the fruit of that *sweet encounter* with the, in the, dark.

Anthrôpos pantôn metron said the Greeks,
The human is the measure/means of all things,

What was carved on the rock wall
Speaks in us now.

6.

BREATH is the light that illuminates the word

...hence the world.

Variation on Cocteau: *Un seul souffle éclaire le monde.*

Learning to breathe in the dark

7.

read seal
= radix too,
the radical,

passing a little intersection in a Boston suburb
and seeing it was called Red Square

(not far from the courthouse where Sacco and Vanzetti were persecuted and destroyed)

Red Square
Red sign
The radical
Interpretation

A word is radical, is root

A word is radical, so we have found the roots

And spoken them

8.

Don't expect any person to do two lives at you.
The poem is a treatise

And sometimes the poet uses prose as a disguise
(like Lorca's wonderful plays, or Olson's wonderful essays)

**the poem is a treatise that can never be made obsolete by subsequent research
because the poem is the prime investigation of its world disclosed.**

9.

Red Seal records,

Records then were disks with grooves on them,
In wax, shellac, vinyl later,

As now the optical gleams refract from the whirling CD

Grooves of light

Light refracted, light concentrated,

To find the center of light.

Let all thought leave a mark
On some wall,

then invent a system to read it,

this reading system is called writing.

(Now I read it to you and you write by hearing)

10.

The oldest sign
The red hand on the wall

Read what someone thought,

Read how someone leaned
Her hand against the wall.

28 November 2000

SOMETIMES TRYING TO BE LINEAR

O I could write a
sentence if I had to
a sentence
if I had two
I could give one
to you. I could
write you a sentence
if I had to, I could
write you as a
sentence and you would
have to. Too.
If I could write you
a sentence
you could have two.

29 November 2000

PERFORMANCE

Loud SOFT
FAST slow

What else
Is there to know?

29 November 2000

FILL ALL THE WORDS WITH SQUARES

A light outside the window
Just say what you see

If you could say it all
That would be everything

And the old world
Would be finished

Done like an Irish song
A Yiddish song

Done like a fish
No longer in the stream

And the new world
Could begin

And it would all be your fault
And you would be

God of it
And it would be your face

Alone
That looked back at you

From all the still waters.

29 November 2000

I don't need to know

transports
heard words

there and here
occasionally

defiled by sense

what the Men of Old
called meaning

they smeared it
lewdly

black on a purple leaf

29 November 2000
listening to Caroline Bergvall

Not us but it

This weird song
no one sings we are

nobody knows

where this will never end

toujours one says

a word for
hundreds of years

clinging
to the sound of itself.

29 November 2000

Why does pillage
Rhyme with village

(the gather of the one
is the scatter of the other)

Why does kiss rhyme with bliss?

(a mouth whispers into yours
all you need to have said

and your lips say be clear be clear
say more make sure

I understand)

Why does breath rhyme with death?

(one is the echo of the other)

29 November 2000

When you fold this paper in half nine times
You will reach the moon

That's all you need.
Unfold it then

And see a picture of the sun
As it really is,

Naked, stripped of its light.
Just the actual one

Itself, all its busy furnaces asleep.
Then fold it up again

And come to me
The sun in one hand the moon in your other.

Come, I am waiting,
I have been waiting since before you were born.

29 November 2000

OBLIGATION TO STORY

Years ago I published a novel (still in print in a second edition from another publisher) called *The Scorpions*. The structure of the book had appeared in my mind before the details of the narration, so in a sense I was writing the story into the structure. The last chapter of the book was the first one I composed, and I wrote towards it. The story excited me — a psychiatrist who falls into the delusory world of one of his patients — but I was even more fascinated by a new sense of time and order. How time works, in the real world, in the written world. The image of a (wind-up) clock that runs down and stops at some moment obedient to its own law, not to the external world or the convenience of its user. And yet the time it told along the way was true time, real time. In the event, the novel seems to end in mid-sentence, as if the story is incomplete. My hope was that the serious reader (or hungry reader) would experience a shock of awareness and understand that the story had indeed reached its conclusion. There are lots of road signs along the way that prepare the reader.

When the book came out, the poet Robert Duncan, with whom I was and remained close, wrote me a severe letter, accusing me of a sin against Story (I think he saw her as a tall, slender Pre-Raphaelite maiden) for ending the book without ending the story. For me the book was the story (or Story, even), and I felt then and feel now that far from sinning against Story, I had discovered one

more way for her to twitch her long gown, another way to reveal the secret ankles of the world, another way to tell.

Nonetheless, Robert proclaimed that I had incurred an “obligation to Story.” I took his proclamation seriously, because of my immense respect and admiration for him and his work, and indeed, I was soon enough writing more and more fiction (The Scorpions had been pretty much my first), much of which was certainly obedient to (even some old-fashioned sense of) Story. I’ve published half a dozen books of fiction since, though most of my work continues to be poetry.

So you can perhaps share my surprise and excitement when I found that phrase “obligation to story” in your poem - - the first time I have ever encountered the phrase anywhere since. It felt (to be honest) like the old poet Duncan speaking to me yet again through the young poet . . . Poets have long believed that one of the many things the act of writing does is to provide a “local habitation and a name” for disembodied poets, voices, lingering (or newly arrived) intelligences. . .

(29 November 2000)

as remorse reminds a maiden so

bricabrac her great-aunt's parlor

spill to me the shadows of your fire

a child huddles by the fireplace
reading an old book with soft pages
his uncle gave him from his own childhood
and as the child reads about the sufferings
of the West Point cadet with toothache
the sinister opium den where Chinese seek
to comfort and capture him
he thinks behind the storythinking mind
the other mind's activities

soft paper old book oldbook new fire
I smell the paper and the fire

old soft old soft I live where I am
I live inside a body and the body

knows the world a different way
from any way I do, my body is not me

but something is soft something is paper
something is old something is fire

and then he sleeps into the story
and the fire begins to speak Chinese
and the long opium dream of a material world
surrounds him in soft darkness
and hides him from himself

you are soft paper
I write on you whatever word I want

and when you wake
you won't be able to tell

me from the fire
and the book
that's under your cheek now
and you will take up in your sleep-numbed hand
will be written with nothing but shadows.

30 November 2000

I had a gloaming too of morning. What wakes us is not the light itself but the dream chance changes when the light's titration changes the menstruum of mind alters the number of night's hydrogen atoms dwindle steeply towards the acid we call waking and the thought of one person moves clear in another person's sleep like a face seen suddenly in fog that tells a traveler he has come home.

30 November 2000

THE WANDERING JEW

By now I have forgotten whatever it was I am supposed to have done. A crime maybe, or an incivility on a public street. In those days I must have imagined that an action had no consequences. I know that a stone dropped into a pool makes ripples, but I also know the ripples stop when they reach the side of the pond. I did not know that the world is a body of water that has no rim. We shiver in endlessness, and an act has no end.

I guess it was a small thing, since I feel no pain, no wheels of Ixion or sneering headwaiters of Tantalus. What was it? We were all Jews together, and one of them became famous, and this is the one I am supposed to have said or done something to. I remember his eyes, half weary, half something else, like a man with his mind on other things, as he looked towards me and said something about waiting for him.

Maybe he wasn't even looking at me. I don't remember having done anything to him, I mean I really can't look into myself and find a small guilty feeling mousing around furtively in the granary of my heart. Maybe I did nothing at all. Maybe he was really talking to the loudmouth next to me who was yelling in bad Greek. Maybe he was talking to the pretty woman in front of me who was crying, but whose soft hips pressed back against me. Maybe he was talking to us all. Whatever, whoever, I heard his

words. A fate belongs to the one who hears it spoken. I heard it, and it became mine. I wander, tired myself now, almost but not quite tired of myself, my mind hard put to it to stick to one thing. I feel now the way he looked then, and I wonder when he will come again or I will go.

30 November 2000

All falling sounds are pleasing since it is when sounds rise that
they threaten us with disappearance into some blue inference
beyond the hands of hearing and leave us abandoned in this thingly
paradise we scarcely know, hello to everything

30 November 2000