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But who was watching
when the furrier
brought the fox pelt back to life
and light came back
into those jet bead eyes

and who was watching when the sailor
reached out one soft hand
and abolished the sea?

These things are how we came to be,
how things vanished and came back
and every animal you see
bears a history of transformation
it wants to but can't tell.
Unless you listen.

That's all I ever tried to say,
listen to the sheep speaking from the wool,
the cow's quiet sermon from your dinner plate,
it all changes
and everything happens to you.

25 December 2004

=====

miracles everywhere
like a slip of
tummy between sweater and skirt.

25 XII 04

ADS

My dreams have ads in them.
At intervals will appear
a teaser for another story
outside the one I'm dreaming,

to be shown later, one
I remember was about a woman
in the Royal Family who soon
would be on the streets.

Walking them, that is.
But I forget the feature dream,
only the ads are clear.
Because ads

structure our experience
of what we experience.
They stand apart, call us
away from the story

into some sort of real,
ironic as Brecht,
save us from emotional
entanglement with what we watch—

they pulls us
from what we want
to what wants us.
Thank God for ads!

26 December 2004

=====
Spicy fish paste yum yum.
Shark is how it starts.
We begin to eat carnivores.
By the time we get to cats and dogs
our own biology will change.

Homo homini lupus
we used to say when I was young,
man a wolf to man,
walking on the frozen Seine
and watching them come in

wolves, bears, boars
all the way from the Ardennes
and we ate them every one
and no one knew the difference

between what we kill
and what we build.
The blood tower blunt
against the winter sky.

26 December 2004

[I was seeing the Tour Saint Jacques as I wrote – but afterwards remembered the Tongue Tower at Thonon, where you take the steamer to Switzerland.]

their hair still fresh from their shampoo,
their eyes still in some cases open,
open blue eyes, amber eyes,

and all I can do is sing.”

And she is listening, she whose
green or hazel eyes have brought
so many lovers to this dangerous salon,
a little marble house
between the Queen of Hearts
and the Knave of Swords,

sorry, the Jack of Hearts I mean,
because it's now, America,

our own terror, our own unlistening.

26 December 2004

On the way out

a door is just a door

we are waiting for the spirit man
who comes to tell us
everything we don't need

“leave this behind you
and that, leave your wristwatch
and your sleeve,

your basket full of brown eggs,
leave your hair
and leave your hips,

all the blue destinations
you cherished, the dog
and the Lexus, the hat

and your fluent French,
you wont need those,
nobody talks there,

nobody sits down,
nobody bites. You can leave
everything you know

because in that country
there is nothing known,
no waking and no deep sleep

it's all like breathing in a quiet room.”

26 December 2004

WINTER POSTCARDS

They tell me so much
but why do I listen?

So I can tell you
who would rather not hear.

I have been here long enough
that I can understand almost
everything they say.

When I try to answer
they don't understand me.
The whole thing is just like poetry.

26 December 2004

ALTERNATIVES TO SYMPATHY

A red ribbon tied in your hair.
An empty sports car on fire.
When the producer finally calls
tell him you don't need the money
but send it anyhow. Buy a camera.
Write a script. Ask a pretty girl
to show you around her town.
She'll know everything you need.
Don't forget to mention her
(misspelling is ok) later
when you write your memoirs,
Fellini in Flensburg. It will never sell.

26 December 2004

=====

Wouldn't it be great if I could eat glass?
Then I could see clearly what's inside me.
What would I see there? A seagull
blown against a winter sky,
an island under heavy rain,
an old man with a guttering torch,
two girls launching a canoe.
What else could live inside a man?
The lions have hidden in the hills
but a solo wolf howls by the railroad tracks.

26 December 2004

=====

Almost finished with this day's work
and it's one a.m. tomorrow.
I master time that masters me.

26 XII 04

=====

A spill to light a candle
the single candle lights the dome.
Light comes from what we do.

We get the spill
from crumpled pages that we wrote.
We get the flame from fire.

26 December 2004

THERE ARE AMPLITUDES

at least I think that's the word
the simple-voice of after-dream
murmured in me as I picked
my way to waking. This pen.

I should tell you to begin with
who I am. I am the one
who wrote what you are reading now.

That's all I know
about our "sweet encounter"
as the saint calls it
who did most of his praying
in poeming, so that we
as we read him (always
going on about Thee and O Thou),
we become for a little while
the God he prays to.

Someone is writing to you,
it must be you, since you're
already reading it
though you wouldn't know me
or San Juan from Adam's
housecat as they used to say
in Kentucky but here we are.

Together. In the intolerable
almost abusive clutch of grammar,
forced to be I and Thou to each other
or else slam the book shut

and go out for a walk
where a red-headed woodpecker
is bothering a tree in the new snow
but it's not clear and never will be
whether it's me or you who's seeing it.

27 December 2004

[We can't help but be *you* to each other. But the Germans till recently said 'they' when they were speaking to 'you,' and even earlier said 'he' when saying 'you' to majesty. How great to come up with a third party to dignify the relationship, to take the pressure off, the terrible burden of youness. So you and the one you talked to could triangulate towards each other, ricocheting off that 'they' who were no one but you. As for 'you,' they could say that only to pet animals, small children, your best friends – and God. Since they couldn't imagine, and I don't want to, a third party to our conversation with Thee o Lord.]

=====
The green calyx of the amaryllis
is beginning to open. Red
shows inside the lips.

Everything is an animal now,
it's winter, everything is frail.

A little windowsill
this side of the snow. Animal.

And like Ishmael I alone am left to tell.

27 December 2004

THE DISCOVERY OF ATLANTIS

The sea did not rise the sea sank.

Leaving the island of Atlantis
joined to the mainland.
Part of the continent ever after.

That is where it is today,
you could walk there if you started
out in the right place.

And where would that be?

You could start from Konya
or you could start from Tirgu Mures
or Sankt Gallen or Rouen,
and the east you'd be looking for
is not necessarily compass east

any more than Turkish Delight delights
any Turks, or only Turks.

There is a deck of cards that shows the way.
Fifty-two ways plus One.
The Path of the Joker.

Going my way?

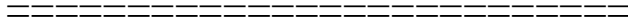
When the glisten is gone from the ink
I too will be gone,

tomorrow, at last light.

And leave these cookies for the fox
who will make offerings for us all
to Ganesh,

 who walks on earth
secure, alert, benevolent:
Lord of Sudden Fortune.

27 December 2004



after Hugo

Tomorrow, once dawn
has come and gone
I will be with you
where the cliffs are forever
saying goodbye to the sea.

27 December 2004

=====

for Irina Slutskaya

But how did I wind up
skating on ice?

How did the grass
freeze beneath my feet,

my ankles strengthen,
my heart lose count?

How did I get so nimble
and the landscape stretched away

in a permanent December
till I was everywhere else

fast and nimble and full of joy
light as a flag in the wind?

What country's flag?
How many times will I turn

before I fall?
And who will I be then?

27 December 2004