A SEQUENCE FOR LATE SUMMER: texts from August & September 2011

So many to make one.

Anaximandros

from the air around
a guess of being
we faltered till we are

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Go back and peel off a few lifetimes of your life—
I am not the one who did this or did that—
the ones I remember are just characters
in the book of my memory.

They were and I am and we are different.

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It keeps trying to tell you
there is nothing but the telling.

Tell what you hear.
Music tries to pretend
the body is a mind.

As soon as men start to dream
again I will be there. Here.

To hold the mind firm
when music drifts—
what do you mean
to say with your song?

You can tell me,
I will always listen,
only that I promise.
Hold me, hand on your arm

for the wind hath brought
me here and the wind
will carry. Hold me
with your words.

Words, songs, hands.
It is late on earth.

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It isn’t about the self there is no self.
None that lasts beyond the seeming.
Blue shafts of light through broken walls.

Every heart is a ruined chapel.
Because you gave me your presence
I exist, streams run, earth moves.

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Because sunlight favors there is not feeling.
All the rest is weaponry men without brothers.
Rain in the parking lot pure potency.
To have gone. And gotten and come again.

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Honest chamberlain to a usurper despot—
that’s what a friend is to a selfish man.

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No one is half as true as tomorrow.

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I remember everything
but only the child stuff
seems to tell me anything.
There is no mystery about the rest.
Everybody works for a living after that.

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What is music?
The “Swan of Tuonela”
tells me a little
of what she knows.
The lights half-closed,
the woodwinds needy.

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We drove one midnight
through the town where
Owlglass was hanged.

The square was empty.
Moon was on us
and the snow had stopped.

But the sea was still nearby.
The land is big.
My mind is bound

with thinking about you,
you are my horizon,
and the horizon’s always far away.

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When the gulls begin to cry
I lie to myself and say I have come home.

*

In the land of the dead
some few live.
The dark personage
who is the tomb,
whose mouth leads ever in.
What do they do down there
those Russian athletes under Africa,
play music, write postcards in tiny
script to God? I can tell by your face
your hands too possess music,
four strings and some hollow wood.
The poet has nothing of his own to say,
only the hollow instrument makes sound.

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To close your eyes
is to be another place
lawful but dangerous—
how dare you walk there
with your naked eyes?

Turn inward further
where the trees grow dense
a gleam of light is all you need
to tell you how far you’ve come,
how far away you are from yourself.

[Transcribed 14 September 2011]
Everything means.

That’s what humans are stuck with on Theme Park Earth—
a million year theologem we’re meant to decode,
by love and insight alone shimmer substance into paradise.

15 September 2011
No More War
In secular seasons
one leaf more on the tree
I put there
you’ll never know
and no one notices
in this strange
assemblage of the actual.

It is green like all the other
but unlike them
it will never change—
averting autumnal always
I am unborn!

16 September 2011
Give myself this moment why.
All the questions
taste like candle wax
and you an altargirl
kneel to ring your pretty bells.
We have said
this Mass together
so many times, the words
I say are really yours,
you smile at my thinking
anybody hears me but you.

16 September 2011
We are fences to each other
and let horses leap them
we also are, and foxes
to wriggle through or under.

What we have kept separate
dries up and blows away—
at least it’s gone when you seek it.
Sometimes I press against your fence

urgent as music, forgetting I am wooden too.

16 September 2011
FROM THE LARGE HADRON COLLIDER

1.
Where are we going
what are we saying
I can only speak
the word in my mouth
that is the tragedy
I want the word
in no one’s mouth.

2.
We want that to speak
and when we hear
we are going back
into the cosmological reciprocal
against the ever outward streaming,
we are the centripetal
to that hazelnut-sized universe
one single thought
from which all matter sprang
and still keeps speaking,
so we are salmon people
who strive against the current
upstream to origin
the first thought and the last.
3.
When resin dries
the letters slip
the words fall off the page—
the cosmos as it is
is a false memory
of what something was.

*The Sun with her head chopped off,*
*tenderness of another man’s wife*  
or memory of a dream
a dream that no one dreamt
we wake from every night.

4.
I went into a room and they measured my heart
they wrote its music down I could not read
they stuck the tentacles of a small machine
to the ten Sephiroth spread out on my skin
*a man is the Tree of Life*
they measured my blood
they told me who I am in numbers
in chemicals and acids
they told me everything but the word
I am supposed even now to to be speaking.
Is this it now?
Will it ever be?

17 September 2011
Did we remember to light the lamp
did we remember the table
to put the lamp on
did we remember the house.

Was the postcard from Berlin still stuck to the fridge.
Did the hurricane flood make the books difficult to read.
Is that the sun shining on the lawn.
It showed a gate in the fence with a fox standing by it.
It showed a zeppelin over a dark sea
It showed children playing with a young goat.
It showed a bus on a sub-Alpine corniche.
It showed Romany musicians playing in the Tiergarten.
It showed the bust of Humboldt and his coat of arms.
The books are fine, a little musty only.
But the buses haven’t stopped here in years.

17 September 2011
ABOUT THE DEAD

But what do the dead do?
Are they our dead
or just the dead
or just dead?

If I die, do I belong to someone?
Someone there
or someone here?
Is there an ownership that begins at death
where the living take control of someone dead

or the other way round, the dead
now takes over the live one?

Will I belong to anyone who speaks my name or thinks of me?

My fingers are cold, it was 42° this morning, it’s hard to guide the pen—this cold must mean I’m one of the live ones still.

Cold dark matter. Warm dark matter. Do we choose? Are we the choice itself?

I wonder if there are slaves among the dead, beings who belong to others?
Maybe we living belong to others too, only the dead know it.

Can the dead seek for liberation?
Imagine dying and becoming the slave of that kid with a blue felt pinking-shears edged cap covered with buttons and insignia. in the boy fashion of the 1930s, the one who played stickball on your street though he belonged on Gerritsen Avenue—and he isn’t even grown up yet, but fully and powerfully dead.

Do the dead go through another kind of puberty?

Tell me about the sex life of the dead. No, don’t.

My right arm hurts when I write about the dead.

We assume everything can be known. But what if there are some things that can’t be known?

There are things to eat that I have never tasted. Maybe death is one of them. Or do I just forget the taste?

Death doesn’t catch up with us. We hurry towards it.

Do the dead hear us? Do we hear them?

Assume each of us is singing a song incessantly. This song is our identity. The swung DNA of our personhood. Assume this song persists after death. Assume that by concentrating on that tune once heard you can hear it again.
Or maybe we hear it whether we intend to or not, whether we attended to it or not.

The ‘squeak and gibber’ of the ‘sheeted dead,’ our inspiration, as Spicer taught, as Cocteau hinted?

The more of your own dead you have, the more you have to say.

Did Rama’s death in 1956 sway me into song (that search for non-mortality)? Did Amy’s death rouse my big transformations of the late ‘70s? Did the Great Deaths of 1989-90 (Joan, Dorje Chang Kalu Rinpoche, Mary, my mother, my father) give me my full voice, ripen me?

I have thought that we have to learn to accept someone’s death (however sad it makes us) as his last gift. Gift it is, but maybe not the last at all.

17 September 2011
We are on the barricades
of an arcane revolt
beyond our measure and our means,
we barely know the fight we do.
Curved bole of pine tree
bow bent against the distances themselves.

17 September 2011
Lift the leg a while
and call it dancing
you were there
both of you and you
said what you said
and I didn’t say it
yes and no are all it takes
to make a brave dance
you said hold old
do we have to be
I don’t know that either
knowing and not knowing
another sort of dance
your back was to me
there was no music.

18 September 2011
Unwieldy instrument
maybe better maybe worse
the dream hangs on, tells me
what to do in circumstances
that will never arise.
Like a miser’s, my fingers
twitch over the blank page.

18 September 2011
There was a hint of waiting
then there was me
a dirt road by a roiling stream
exuberant foliage.
Everything hides.  Pan
who is everyone also, thing
by thing and you  by you,
the tree’s tongue and the cloud’s
testament.  Then there was
me, an idle know-nothing
holding blue flowers, showy,
color of sky not autumn yet.
In between time and time
another animal slips in—
call him ‘me’ too,  And he
only does not hide.

18 September 2011