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Displacements. Years pass.
People go to islands
every island is far away

so not to remember
a goal is something gone
the sea is around it

against it
without punctuation the sky
plentiful answers

fruit in the mouth tells
names have tastes
you are the fore-edge of a cloud

distance between bodies is made of light
no grounds for despair
divorce is a kind of weather

spool climate of far places
one long hair caught in a tender spot
eyes on the palms of her hands
only she gives off light
white people look half baked
not done yet is that why we talk

pale palaver punishes stillness
roadside shrines the girl sets down
one tray of rice on one tray of flowers.

12 August 2012
Always trying closer than can  
a forward looking breath  
stirs the pale hairs on the forearm  
the opposite of apocalypse  
the shrouding the hiding  
Calypso is the girl who conceals  
the nature of someone in his seeming  
the trees surround her he surrenders  
clouds look on so slow they move  
wind on his knees  
do they even want him?  
What do they do with their prisoners  
everything worth saying is getting ready to be said  
at last the thunder  
sometimes the rain  
delicate lines—  
once he drew them with water on her palm  
then sprinkled sugar on them  
blew off the residue so the lines showed  
read them told them  
then licked them off with his tongue  
causing her to feel faint  
for just three seconds then smile—  
how difficult it is to read
or to be read!
She gets the meaning he gets the sugar
he can’t tell which taste is sugar which is skin
she lets the wetness dry on her hand
all experience leaves you sticky
afraid to say yet afraid to say go
aparte take this chalice from me
I have to drink
birds in the sky without saying why.

12 August 2012
There’s something obsolete
already about an airplane.
There’s one overhead right now
and when I hear it I think
it’s forty years ago—
the airstrip by the Kingston Bridge
looks like a yard sale
all those tacky little planes
waiting for someone (who?)
to love them up
into the sky. And the sky
above them looks old-fashioned
blue and white and pink
edged cloudlets—
Christ, where is the new
the cutting edge
the color beyond the world?

12 August 2012
Dissolving
Styrofoam in acetone
or make from it rise
homunculus pure white and dangerous—
alchemical man
without a laugh
all shape and no behavior
and then the projector lamp blew out
and we were blind. Back to back
creatures of a single risk—
a face in the cloud.

12 August 2012
For the pure of it,
  the god.
Or some conniving after
to find god in the other or
other as,
tender blasphemies of
the word,
  the beginning.

2.
It seems we have to say it
over and over till it turns true
and we know the places we come from
dank subways down
blushing cement steps,
empty roads by elderberry,
summer shoddy beaches,
were real enough to get us here
where I feel you beside me and know—
  but not know enough.

3.
Religious stories told to children
to shape the shadows in them
giving faces to things.
Fears glories fascinations
— that tree of talking heads
the Persians drew
bright colored with all the tongues of men

as if women were silent in those days.
Or I can’t hear.

4.
William Rufus took an arrow
through the eye and died.
Margaret Murry has a book
that tells us how and why.
She lives a hundred years
and knew more than she said.
I never met her
but we were living
on the same earth at the same time.
In the same old forest new,
on New Year’s Day, when time comes riding
to take one’s life away.

5.
Still there are roses on this tree.
We call them roses
but who knows who they are,
what thornless pedigree
brought them to America.
Or were they always here
like you and me?

6.
So the poem lives by itself on the high prairie

and we can bring people to visit it
from time to time,

maybe we get there hung over or still drunk,
a wagon full of girls from town,

wandering preacher with a wolf cub for a pet—
you know the story.

And the poem always knows.

13 August 2012
Nearer to the Styx
you start to remember.
So many things
claim to be your mind.

Claim to be you.
Desires. Regrets. Remorse.
And which of all these
yous is you?

And so you have to rush
to the river to cross over
to where there is nothing
left to remember.

13 August 2012
Something about monkeys
they have tails
tells us something.

And they have hands
on their feet as well
*quadrumanes* the French
call them, four-handed
folk of the forest
we would say if we let
ourselves remember.
Monkeys are nimble,
apes are thuggish and clumsy.
What happened to them,
what happened to us?
Where is my graceful tail?
Where are my other hands?

13 August 2012
How to tell a story
so the story listens.
Invent some skin
and let someone slowly
come to inhabit it.

We are built from outside in—
too many stories think
and think that character’s enough.
Character is just a behavior
of the skin, like a rash
or prickly heat.

Every child knows that. I am my skin.
And mothers say each blemish,
freckle, pimple, wart—
that’s your badness coming out
a proposition with which
Dr. Hahnemann would agree—
the skin’s the writing tablet
for every woe—
Freud would concur, and Charcot.

Start with skin. Start
with touch. Everything else
is consequence not cause.
And most of all because
around the skin there is another skin
made of light and sometimes and gleaming,
the elf-shine of our real meaning
that we can see now and then
each other as we really are
as painters mostly can, and writers
have to trace as best they can—
skin and shine are the same root word,
the seeming of what we are.

14 August 2012
What makes me feel better than I am?
And why would I want that?

14.viii.12
Techniques for being in another country without leaving home begin with the breath.

Short breath long breath wide breath skinny breath deep and shallow—
the mix matters.

Here, I’ll breathe you to France—
how the words get in
terrupt
ted tells
a lit
tle bit how
to go
and then you’re there.
The air smells different,
traffic rattles through the trees
the parish church
begins to bong its bells.
Breathe in, now out
and Munich is not far.
See the nervous artists trying to relax
on the nice warm autumn grass.

14 August 2012
Mastering them to master us.
The discord is only cognitive—
in her eyes
you see you’re alive.
That’s all that matters—the beatific gaze
that infants us.
We are born again each instant from that glance.

14 August 2012
Read too much and not enough.
I’ve never been to Africa
is this a discontinuity
nothing happens but what we know
rhapsodies of defunct societies
enrapture schoolboys now—
Greek is a boyish language
which makes Sappho and Corinna and Praxyla
all the more remarkable—
wilderness has no beginning
no natural end
things to do and not remember
remember not to do
wu wei
the white banner raised above the fray.

2.
Fewer names than feelings.
Let’s play a game—
name the one who touches you
from across the room.
No movement permitted —
sweep the fallen leaves
off into the woods.
Analyze the pattern of stream flow
in this region— it gets
warmer when the sun rises—
that much even I know —
action at a distance —
you’d be angry if you knew what I was thinking—
the rivulet meets the stream
meets the river meets the sea.
What does the sea meet?
Is it the sky, that blue-grey maybe
from which the rain?
And how is rain different from my hands?

14 August 2012
Let the boxes linger unopened
there’s plenty of time to be somebody else—
no need for now.
Past gone, future nowhere, present an illusion —
drink my coffee and think myself wise.

14.viii.12