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Why do I want what I want or
it wants me the way the sun wants shadow
I am the artifact of it whatever it is

but to be on the other side of it
christen like springtime the not much on my mind
tree stump a prowling deer over snow

the enigmatic images that drive us nuts
why is a cinderblock like a pansy
nobody is listening and that’s why

too many answers to too few questions
that’s been bothering you all these years
poinsettia tree in the Taunus hills

he wouldn’t speak although I cried his name
suppose I called you up and mispronounced you
suppose you couldn’t hear me through the snow

all those sparrows! the trees are restless
reading a book about the eye with tired eyes
three tiers of boxes round the Queen’s enclosure
growl louder sycophants you bass avunculars
cozy up to pinch soubrettes and sip their tea
not even the cat is looking for trouble

man with clip-on bowtie orders cappuccino
kind whimsy of wait-staff blue-eyed husky
so many tables! inside as bad as out!

animal everywhere! maxims maim the spirit
pawky semaphores her limp fingers flap
I only know you want something but so do I

and it’s never the same is it, why even try.

5 January 2011
LUSTROUS PACKAGES

abound but who
would dare deliver
the consciousnesses trapped in them
when all our glee is glitter?

Imagine the somber-sober Principal within
who would unarm and falter free
looking at you with the candid eye
of never-dying spirit,

could you bear that?
When such a one might look at you and say
I am not what I seemed, darling,
and now there is nothing to see.

5 January 2011
TO THE SUNNE

Go behind a cloud
and gone me,
go ahead, and I don’t care,

I kiss the shadow of you too,
on the scale
of human life (that’s she and me)

there’s no way to be gone.
Neither you nor she can
escape my reverent horseplay,

any more than I can flee
the granting and holding back
of your fierce beam.

We sing at each other
croaking joyous
across the spacious

silences of mind.

5 January 2011
Not so much nothing as the sum
of other absences. Earlier,
when the wind still knew how to blow
and there were flounder in Broad Channel
and I thought that everything I could see
was for me.

    Meant for me
at least, and it was, and I took hold
as best I could of marshland
and shouting gulls and the edge of the sea

and that was enough for me,
the sea was not to go
the sea is everlasting coming

and it came so much into me
like a bible that I can still be
far away from the word of it
and still embrace
that multitudinous emptiness.

6 January 2011
But first Africa.

I will not yet believe we began there or any one where but everywhere.

Myth of single origin, myth of Eden.

No.

We happened everywhere and interwove and interbred as we still do.

I see a lake
in Switzerland or where the Rhone on its way down pauses in Leman across from where H.D. wept on her balcony hearing Pontius Pilate’s
ndless explanations below the lake.

I don’t believe in Eden.
I hold the stupid apple in my hand.

6 January 2011
Having left the place where place is
there is only being.

Being must be the same as knowing—
a jitter of consciousness
with feeling in it,
I am doing something with what I see.
Hear. Taste. Smell. Or touches me.

Say a friend’s hand
holding a glass of water.
This is the limit of epistemology.

7 January 2011
Resign myself

to being actual—
snow sifts down
and I have to talk about it

But report is not response,
I am bound by law
to respond to everything that happens.

My law, the kind I can’t break,
dare not.

Answer me
says the snow.
Take my temperature says the linden tree.

7 January 2011
Nerves. Need me.

Tell a story about a goat.
Sheep. About a ghost—

that creature you see in the gloaming
on the stairs, the whiff you feel
of someone passing in the dark—all
of them are you,

    your past years
and the man you were in them
are still here.

    They crowd the house,
they are terrifying, they are trying
to find themselves in you
right now. Trying
to come back to life in you.

Every ghost is the ghost
of some you you have slain,
outgrown, misunderstood,
forgotten.

    The way you looked
in 1983, imagine if that face
looked in the window now.
You look Jewish, you look young.
Like your face last night
in nightmare, but even paler,
eyelids quivering.

7 January 2011
KISSTORY

_Aisling_ means dream in Irish
but I dream in English
a lion kisses me with a woman’s mouth
how can that be?

And how can I be
anywhere where kisses come
or resemblances can detected?

A red cardinal almost black in falling snow—
how do I know what language things speak?

My mother tongue is hard enough for me,
I have a speech impediment, it is language.

But when you read me never be sad
take off your shoes and be glad
turn out the light and be bad—
every great artist is an infant trying hard to fall asleep.

7 January 2011
THE AXIOM

And I was ready for each sound
ready as a merman in the afterglow
looking for new words in what I heard

what does the sound say? song
is an old mistake, to make the noise
say what’s on our habitsick minds

instead of listening to it, hearkening
to what the sound is saying, and not
the way we colonize sound, exploit it.

Hearken! Ken by hearing! Know what it says.

8 January 2011
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Cast upon the light
snow takes all of it
writes on the dorsum of everything
(our bellies keep colors of their own)

8.1.11
A pomegranate is many, it is one,
we taste its color
just as the sky tastes us

we are many, we are one,
and we are none,

wake up every morning free.

8 January 2011
So many stumbles on the beach to find you
when there is no sea and no one there
but me and the marshgrass and the lonely sky

the nice thing is we’ve been at it forty years
almost and—wait a minute there’s a seagull coming now
and a tern screams and a plover drags its wing

and the sea comes back and there you are at last
sloshing sideways through the surf as if
walking my way but too far off to know.

Why are we too far off to know?
Am I complaining? Stumble
is the root meaning of peccatum

which Christians translate as sin.
I have sinned on sand. You sin
on surf as you approach

though in fact you may not be coming
my way at all, just having fun with the sea
the way women do. Men
are mostly along for the ride.
for Elizabeth Snowden, in revenge

You are so girl of it you
make every else woman so
you sent your golden spears to me
me suddenly girled by your man-how

so strange I take kind to get even I wrap
scarlet silk around you tight tight
now you are Kali’s, then throw rice powder
all over your face and chest and now
you are Saraswati’s
and you have to sing to me
to make my silver
of your gold spears of yours fly back to you.

8 January 2011
THE PHYSIOLOGY

Want know when receive
recede wapiti at 12,000 snow
summer mistook me for her own
but I belong one does to whoever speaks
that is the rule the rigid rapture
sung around your neck faux-fur the little eyes
for kindness sake a miracle mathematic myth
what is the operational etymology of to be
esse einai on and why Parmenides
because no one is there to understand
rhapsode? swim-bladder dried yellow peas
in dry gourd Rothenberg’s rattle sound of truth
unmistakable authentic unfocused
being all over you it is not desire it
is organelle or bewilderment in the flesh
the Mayans know it a crocodile or a wind
it moves things around spirit is all verb
and no noun what are you going to do?

Release me from feeling let me know
I need the things you tell me heap yourself round me
skandhas proliferate iron gate a wolf to tell
the story ate you all night long dream teeth God
rests undisturbed beyond the chalkmark pentacle you conjured in
for it is magic to think logic is masturbation of the mind
be approximate Lady as if the hibiscus
grew without the stem or housewall or weather
sparrow flutter and no sky your two hands
arranging the sounds of light peer through the gate religion
is the oldest music has no etymology there’s no one there
to do or be done whatever has a hymn in it is a church
I press my ear on your belly and hear me murmur in your womb

None of us is born yet warmth still around us
I can’t find me in the crowd we’re all
trying to get through your door at the same time
in and out are the same how you know inside it
some houses could not hold wit’s interest
the basement the heartbeat in the wall nobody’s
I am a victim of narrative a thread
holds us together a sinew strong the piano sounds
thick tight-coiled wire of the lowest world help me
I am falling into the sound the swelling of it
that does not die away the way sound should
what is this sense that is always beginning
a horn exalted between us between-land
hum-land try to answer naked in public
a song spoiled by hearing
dance is a fierce sly subtraction
from the actual body music
should just move by itself inside
the body stands to hear still dance the polar principle dance should despise music even words confess it would make you dance
or walk the plank over the meaningful waves
drown you in the phony rapture speak
save me I save you it’s your turn to lift
the sun is tired of my words the moon accords

Or is it growing to be green lap land
small dear thighs of love you language is farrow beasts
of the sky littered here among us
don’t ever want you to want me
a letter fallen from the mailman’s hand floats the kindness
of gravity bears it away the gutter
rain run-off the heart-flutter of your mouth work
the words too spill in your throat leave out
all the human names travel in
where the ocean of the interior is so crowded with ships
brave white wet canvas bellying out the silent wind
your breath fills the sky the sky travels
the ships stand still the vessels! the vessels! all are full
because it is alchemy after all come back to us
organ tone of no surprise tonor how the meaning
held up to the sky shows through the body
of the sky looks down on us and up at us at once
I told you it was difficult you were blue you had stars
painted all over your body because we are in her always
in her the inescapable imaginary actual we taste
you also each other from very far.

9 January 2011