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1.
Willing to scare the barn
so many deer on an ordinary lawn
foxes in London wild boars in Berlin
our children come home to be us
we who are or were briefly
briefly alive animal but then.

2.
Portuguese anthems rose rainy Sunday
closepacked black church by the river
I saw this with my camera
I heard it with my book
I rose on wings of self-deception
high over the untrafficked harbor
and saw far off the coastline of America
looking like just a part of the rain.

3.
So there are things that thing you
when you dare to look and be nobody—
just an hour or so, somebody
always wants to get back behind the wheel
and go, just go, we live by going
and transcend by sitting down. Reading
was a magic that taught men to sit still.

4. Now the woods are the color of the air and what to do?
Things stumble into one another, becoming what they touch.
Essences are pretty specious to begin with — o to live
in a world without essences and only accidents, and from those
glittering alphabets of endless happenstance
read then write a new constitution of thatness, that is
hereness, newness, and all such vanishments
and kiss them wetly as they hurry past and disappear.

10 January 2012
THE TRAP

We fell into belief, we believe in fact—a Latin participle meaning something made up. There’s nothing to believe and no need to. Just taste everyone and persuade no one, touch and let go.

10 January 2012

[End of Notebook 340]
And afterwards were people on the road
neck of the woods, a theremin
humming in a young man’s cabin,
arguably innocent, one slim powerline
quivers in the wind, trees encroaching
the jarring of elements in Lucretius,
melody is not natural to the world,
there is a planet from which the alphabet,
toast by the fireplace, be a girl, Montana
maybe, wind your old watch, a waitress
from Madeira, blonde, talk to her,
let her remind you gently of the Virgin Birth,
epiphany, the rights of man and the citizen,
how many more strokes in this ideogram,
Mendeleev, her poor father broke his collarbone,
her sister waiting for her down in Dun Laoghaire,
is it enough, love, enough love, the harbor,
the big cannon pointing straight at Napoleon,
almost there, coffee stain on her nice apron,
she’d never read Pessoa, you touched
meekly the socket of her thumb, her palm
you read, tracing the lines you tried to see,
told her all the good stuff, nobody needs
to hear the rest, I learned it from a book,
I have no parents of my own, no broken bone,
everything started just this minute now,
all memories are false, mere molecular accidents,
stiurrings of the juices in the brain, no matter,
I muttered all this and she listened patiently
while the Irish Sea glistered in the morning sun.

10 January 2012
ARS SCRIBENDI

Train yourself to write with your leg.
Your hip. The heel of your hand.
Ball of the foot. Back of your head.
Make your house learn to talk.
Goad it gently like a tired old ox.

10 January 2012
We have passed the angry time
thee and I
    I heard—who spoke
or spake? Seemed like old uncle Seymour
(called Simon)
    who always thee’d people
like a Quaker in a book he wasn’t,
    husky-voiced
from ruined lungs (poison gas, Argonne)
talking to his youngest brother my father
Samuel (called Jim)
    telling of the wars they lived through,
angry at the Boches, Nazis, Japs, Reds, Viet Cong,
we had so many enemies
but no more, no more war.
    Does a man
reach peace before a nation does,
    a one-man nirvana?
Or a couple of old gents
long dead now (forty years, twenty years)
linger peaceable in the dusty
parlor of my back-mind
    where not much stirs,
sun in old windows,
    not even a cat.

11 January 2012
THE WHEEL

Counting the spokes of the wheel I come nine
what is this eccentricity of mine?
a spoke that floats, a spoke
reaching neither hub nor felloe of the wheel so
what is it doing there in my religion
like an arrow floating in the river or
the slack prick of one of those naked
ash-covered ascetics you still see
jiving around India, you and them, sadhus.
Apollonius saw them and learned offhand
that wisdom comes from nakedness—
bare skin just a reminder of the naked mind.

2.
The arrow goes to school
learns civility,
to point but not penetrate,
count, but not people.
The river it floats in
lasts longer than water.

3.
Thought Experiment: If Plato’s writings had not been recovered during our Renaissance, and came to light only now, how would his strenuous and wordy dialogues be received? In a world of ordinary language philosophers and cognitive
sciences, would the Timaeus be tossed aside as a New Age guesswork? Would the whole corpus of his thought seem idle, elitist, relentlessly playful, full of easy ironies and glib victories, undoubtedly amusing, a Wodehouse of the mind?

4.
Bells ring. Centuries pass.
A beeper goes, a truck packs up.

5.
Think nothing. Know.
Do nothing. Be.

In the mysteries, Burkert tells us Aristotle tells us, the initiate comes to a station where mathein works no more, and gives way to pathein. No more learning: now it’s time to experience.

But experience’s word, pathein, means also to suffer. To endure. To let it happen, let it be. So in a sense Aristotle may not wholly have not intended, learning leads to suffering. But this thing called suffering is the mind’s awareness of itself perceiving. Awareness.

6.
Equestrian energy.
Take a white horse
to the end of the world.
Let him go, follow him all the way back.
In this manner
find out where you are.

7.
The first act is best
in every opera.
Usually the longest too.
All the rest is afterludge,
footnote tune,
filling in the gaps. Drama
lives in its first deed.
*Im Anfang war die Tat.*
Everything is implied by that.
Every story happens instantly.
Like the sky, all there at once.

12 January 2012
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Let the music master
old commercial associations
Mahler’s Seventh soft hell waiting
hawk hits your window
calls you back to you call this life?

Soft soft hell, mean sentimental devils
remind you that there’s no lap left
to burrow in, no Mozart’s sister,
no Cosima.

Music’s like that
leaves you high and dry—
literal the idiom,
your hand reaches out for
even an empty cup.

13 January 2012
AMONG TREES

1.
If I were people I would run on roads
I would be ugly thing among the beautiful
commonplace of trees and cars and wet highways
wet highways once I heard a voice
telling me where my death is, Your death
is not here, it said, your death is in
another country. Then I will be taken
out of the equation, the answer will change
slightly. And their highways too
will gleam in sunlight after pre-dawn rain.

2.
Wait, I have work to do
I have buzzing in my ears
all the cicadas of August
inhabit me, I am
a monster of hearing it.
Listen, I turn random
noises into language
for you—not so big a change.
And you are not so very far.
3.

Unspeakable witness
spoke, saying I am…

“I am deeply affected by where I am, the trees all around me when I wake. How can I not attend to the trees and tell their stories, lost as they mostly are in remembering? The trees are old yogis cherishing their undistracted awareness. They stand. The trees are playful girls shimmying around me in the wind. Cold wind. Often though the trees stay still and look at me. Who can endure the inspection of a tree, they look at me with so many eyes. The yew tree right outside my window, it moves differently from all the rest, different from the wind, it looks in, I fumble maong loose metaphors, a tree always makes me feel slipshod, half-finished. Yes, I have windows, yes, I live in a house. But for five or six critical years as a young man I lived in an apartment from whose five windows no blade of grass or any growing thing could be seen. Once in those days I visited a friend in Riverdale and stayed the night, woke and the windows were full of sun and leaf shadows wavering and trees, trees. I began to sob, I cried, I sobbed with resentment at my life, I wanted to be with trees, I confess it now. I am a sluttish Druid, in love with all of them, full of worshipful neglect and shy to touch. A tree is a presence, sheer presence, what the man from Romania called kratophany, the show of power, power of presence for this morning moment taking form. These forms. Around me. Every day they remake my mind.

13 January 2012
What can I do
with my new mind
but tell you, tell
you everything
I used to do. The kiss
of silence on us both.

13 January 2012
SOMEONE QUOTES ME

but I don’t know where I said it
somewhere, in someone
else’s mouth maybe,
or I found it on the ground

a scrap of paper I picked
up with reverence because
they told me Jews do that,
everything might have

the name of God on it
everything must be lifted
from the ground and said
so I said it out loud

onto its own piece of paper
and you heard so you know
what name finally got spoken
because you understood.

14 January 2012
**Inula helenium**

“Elegant pain”
after years
I hear again
the misheard flower
yellow and heals.

14 January 2012
RED OCTAGONS

They pretend to slow down
they pretend to stop
but the radio keeps going
as if the whole car and its man
were just an afterthought,
reverb, made by the music.

14 January 2012
THE CITY OF THE WORLD

has no streets
a few animal tracks
spoor, marga, we get to follow
between trees over rocks
sand rat paw prints in deserto—

the city of the world
shimmers in a man’s head
a woman’s head
they think their way
forward, forums,
marketplace of all that seems.

Dragon weather over them
all round them the breath
of all the dead before them,
their last breaths linger
as our atmosphere

the city of the world is ours
we trudge along our misconceptions
sticking closely to
wherever we have strayed before
we open the doors of illusion
and shelter in vanity

but the world is there
all round the city
when we dream sometimes we see it

or sense it dimly
the way a clam might sometimes intuit
a mighty ocean around his snug shell.

15 January 2012
Why do I always draw five
when not a six-point star
why not Jewry?
A priestless sect
perplexed with scholarship—
must have room for me.
Pure linguistics and smart food.

15 January 2012
Try to calm the angry jogger
in you. Dying, the play says
Henry, you’re scaring me! Woman’s voice.
Calm the pumping heart—a man
has only so many heartbeats in him
assigned by fate—don’t use them up
on flexercise machines. You
are not a gizmo, you are Time
itself, beautifully ensorcelled into flesh
to do the work of Time in one another,
telos, tell us a sky a story sing us a song
don’t just bounce there with your
sweat pouring out. What good is sweat to us?
And what quality of life does a jogger have
fleeing invisible enemies panting over winter roads?

15 January 2012