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= = = = =

*towards an Ars Poetica*

Make it smaller  
pack it denser  
it will keep  
longer, keep  
saying more  
than you meant.

4 February 2009

= = = = =

Is there still a chance  
or did fortune also  
let her wheel stumble  
crack its felloe, fall?

The axle of the world  
still holds – someday  
it will turn again,  
but now entropic winter

holds its high harsh note  
like some old tenor in Palermo—  
maybe ridiculous comparisons  
will finally crack our ice?

4 February 2009

= = = = =

*Strangled with music*  
*the sun forgives*

carved in Latin  
that was  
on a stone I found

4 February 2009

= = = = =

It dries a different color  
than it is. No, the nun says,  
different *from*. So different  
from it is I am. I too  
have knelt in front of Jesus  
I too have worn His name,  
now I am the ink that writes it down.

5 February 2009

= = = = =

But was there something there  
I called a dragon or a rug rolled up  
a rat on the horizon inhaling  
the smoke of all my stacks

a wooden water tower perched  
rocketwise on blue rooves?  
A bird told me. And ever since  
I have been doing what I'm told

I think I am but never really  
knew what that bird said, I hear  
the voice of her even so even still  
and hearing is obeying.

Someone laughing in the woods,  
laugh is such a false sound, laugh  
is such a betrayal of someone,  
a wife you're not married even to,

a laugh is a betrayal of the sky.  
Someone is going to kill me here  
because I am a hero and a hero  
is someone always already dead.

The ground does something odd  
where a hero's buried, a heap  
of stones and travelers pour out  
a little of their wine on them,

stones, a hero wears stones  
the way the earth wears sky  
and laughter upends them all,  
in cheap resemblances

I have spent my life, my sword  
seldom sheathed and even less  
frequently employed. The gods  
are still waiting for me there,

there being wherever I have not  
traveled. At the crossroads  
right at my house I heard a voice  
more worded than the bird was,

said Your death is in another  
country, your death is not here.  
And what country is further  
than tomorrow? I sleep in dread.

5 February 2009

= = = = =

But one more may have been here—  
a flag. A hurricane  
remembers warm seas.  
Monsters mean me always.

They walk towards me  
the way forests do – slowly  
and with John Muir’s appraising  
eyes and John Muir’s beard—

the trees (we say) come down  
to the water. We have seen them  
there, the pines speaking German,  
the lindens whispering to bees.

Everything in a certain frame of  
mind is a flower. You and I  
drinking diet coke in Buffalo  
say, or walking off Oswego

way out on the frozen lake.  
The north has its mysteries  
in the land where nothing grows  
but everything knows.

5 February 2009

= = = = =

Care for  
what comes  
The rest  
will follow

6.II.09

= = = = =

Predication is prediction—  
that is the force of destiny,  
the fate, the thing that has been spoken,  
I mean the terror of our condition.

6 February 2009

(To make any statement establishes it in the realm of the knowable, *in-beings* it, makes it an entity before (but automatically on the way to) making it real.)

= = = = =

Take me to another place  
the nearly gone. the faraway  
whence Gilgamesh ascended  
into the Plain of Now—  
marveling at human need  
and being one with it,  
a tired man kneeling on a stone.

6 February 2009

Olin

## KNOWING BY THE RIVER OF IT

But what does happen to the colors?

Wise man, wink at child birds  
afore they know to fly they're flower,

*this is my own*

the poor man said  
looking at his shadow.

2.

What's wrong about the American art world  
is that they're still obsessed with F.Ll.Wright  
builder of a few cranky houses for the rich  
and pay no such adulation of F. Olmstead  
who had the decency and temerity to  
build lasting pleasure places for the people—  
even the poor are allowed in Central Park.

3.

Adequate essay — back to song,  
I mix my genres  
as you your genders, dear,  
and say what saying has to say

any way it says it — who  
am I to shape a box for it  
when its own leaf and shell and bract and fruit  
come true?

All I'm good for  
I let it say.

4.

Try it, child,  
don't criticize.  
You know nothing  
before you've done it.

Epistemologists  
wringing their dry hands  
taste of sugar in a mute man's mouth.

5.

I sleeked however  
warm oil on all your skin  
folds and tender amplitudes  
and sudden dark departures—

then you were fit to wrestle  
and we are struggling too  
to escape from skin  
all the way in.

6.

What do you mean you can't  
see the relation  
of these parts to one another  
or to some whole?

I am your mother and your father,

I am your little son.

I am your soul.

7 February 2009

= = = = =

I have to start thinking.

The birds are not enough.

To name them

would also be a song

but you've heard that one,

they sing it in your sleep

hunkering as they do against the cold

over the insolent eaves

your bedroom target of all art.

What keeps puzzling me is how

you can really tell apart

thinking from just hearing

what it all keeps saying in your head.

8 February 2009

= = = = =

When you can understand  
the newspaper  
you know you're too old.

When you read the paper  
you feel virtuous and noble,  
faithful to that which betrays you

time after time,  
chaste wife of a libertine  
you are, reader,

at the breakfast table  
confident in your own way,  
smiling at his lies.

8 February 2009

## FULL MOON

But for whom? For all  
around beneath – unowned  
participant in those who  
participate in it. Beyond  
it's never full or always is.  
We need no alternation  
to confound our expectation—  
wait — everything knows  
everything — just hold it close  
between your thighs and squeeze.

2.

Every time we look  
up at it in trees  
or over your shoulder  
squeezed between  
medium-tall buildings  
as it rises over Brooklyn  
seen from the Lower East  
Side it is a remake of  
the first experience of all  
look a light in the sky.

3.

And as it moves we move  
constantly altering the scene  
where it is seen, blue moon,  
white moon brighter than ever,  
ruddy ring around it too  
ice crystals foretelling snow  
thinking of you, nobody  
wants to make love just once.  
Take him back. The moon.  
Life is theme and variations.

4.

The imaginary object  
impersonates the moon.  
It is omniscient indeed  
any thing knows everything.

5.

Ugly little dogs  
in children's clothes  
pedal tricycles,  
a loathsome clown  
mc's egregiously  
We watch forever  
no matter what is shown.

6.

We think it's fleas  
that monkeys chase  
inside their fur  
whereas in fact  
it is pure seeking  
the hand entices  
distances, the skin  
touches the unknown.  
The flea is an accident  
of the quest, a hapless  
incident in the interior,  
deep in the jungle  
of the flesh the unknown  
continent. Suddenly  
your back in moonlight  
and I am healed. Realed.

9 February 2009

## RESTAURANT

*for Marcel Proust*

Sad how the profile vanishes  
when her face turns to me  
her eyes full of speaking  
but without the definition  
of those bones that just  
a moment before made her  
seem to be all meaning,  
and so the words her eyes  
intend, which she herself  
thinks and thinks she means  
are incomprehensible to me.  
I read the sentence but not  
the text all round it that and  
that alone makes it make sense.

10 February 2009

Kingston