2-2009

febD2009

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WHAT THE HOUSE SAID THIS MORNING

Sun rays
through white duck
curtains maybe

say it clearest.
the part even I understand,
half-deaf,

listen to the light tell
this story about you
it’s been telling

since I moved into this house
the year you were born – there,
that’s a precision

of the sort a place remembers,
creak of the wood on the old
stairs in those days

the cry
of you newborn, still far?
No, you would not cry,

your nature I think holds
everything complete, intact, known,
best understood by stillness.

And into that certainty
I still come home,
but what a dull thing love is

when it’s just about the lover
and all the things he feels,
can barely express
the accurate beauty
of the actual you.
God, I wish my love were pure

as this sunlight is
or at least the soft pale curtains,
being themselves but still

letting the real light through.

a Valentine for Charlotte
14 February 2009
a centaur on parole,
a freeman on a morning
unspoiled by breakfast)

14 February 2009
Art is not about anything.

Art is about everything.

Art is about everything all at once.

That is why art is confusing, has to be confusing, has to be hard.

Because it is about everything all at once the way the world is everything all at once,

confusing and multiple and no way to get a handle on it

except art is the handle.

Art is confusing the way the world is confusing, only the confusion is small, focused, hard-edged, you can pick it up often and hold it, size of a poem, or hang it over your bed, size of a painting, or walk around it in the street and pee on the plinth of it, a statue, god knows what,

a focused confusion.

A confusion you can pick apart and reassemble.

A confusion you can endure: you can stand under it, and that is almost as good as understanding.

Maybe better. It is better. Art is better

the way the world is better.

Art is standing under the world.
I have forgotten how to come down the stairs
I have forgotten how to put on a sweater
I have forgotten how to tie my necktie
if it weren’t for my body I would have forgotten everything.

14 February 2009
The morning celebrant
rests on high wind up there
and down here only
light falls to remind

the Aither over—
a heart with a hat on it
as a trueblood love-leaver
smites the ocean that divides

him from the place
where he would be only himself
wave by wave
the flat of his hand says goodbye

14 February 2009
INNER EAR

Trying to be sure
rehearses wheat.
Earbuzz a private
winter jungle hum
and who can listen
to what I hear?

In ear is no us,
is the private place
the ampersand between
the world and me
but not you.

What can I know
of what you hear?
Even saying so says
almost nothing.
A ring with no finger.
or a whole hand
reaching out and no
skin out there
anywhere to touch,
we can say Listen!
but we can’t say Hear!

14 February 2009
SEAFOAM, GULLS

dragging at fish skeletons
some meat left, sea bass,
the meat as our own meat
in the salt scum, red
as anything. Gulls.
Go gulls. Bleak
wave-curvy man-hungry sky
reaches down, pulls
them high. And gulls
around on moorings perched.

Are any of us here for long?
Is there a language even gulls know
I fail? Cathedrals
all round us made of light and air,

nothing more needed ever,
shape is not substance
and shape is all, shape is enough.

The shape of hunger. A gull
too long in the sky. A tree
is not wood.

So it turns out at last
that a word is made of glass.
When you look at it close up
you see your own curious face
staring out as you stare in.

Any word. And when you use it
the gulls fly up, the word
breaks, scatters all over the page
with all the other jagged slivers.
It hurts when you read.

14 February 2009
Gender abolishes passion.
That is the problem, a hum
where there should be silence,
silence where there should be word.
Girltalk all day long
among signs of sense,
glad armchair philosophers
happy to descry or to despise.
Don’t always hold back honey
though shyness is your most
luminous asset, don’t spend
too long fondling the possibles
too little with the actual
between your molars if I may.
A thing remembered sometimes
equals any other thing, that
is the pain of memory, it’s trivial,
like people having dogs
in the same apartment house
and you don’t have a dog and you
don’t especially like dogs but
you like the people who have them
and the building your own home
after all that dogs are being had in.
So it’s not all bad, the world,
even if it smells like dogs sometimes.

Ghost of a dog. Trivial memories!

Erase and leave behind a gap
that smells like a yawn, that’s not good,
keep the memories, doesn’t matter,
the unremembered is always bigger still,
don’t let them take the world away
they’ll let us keep it just as long as we
make joyous use of it, lewdness,
sanctity, tenderness, appetite and such.
If not, they’ll take the sum away
and leave the naught. The gap
our ancestors could still remember
(those black-skinned Gauloises)
way behind them in Ginnungagap,
the Yawning Gap between or after
or before or anyhow not now.
Hardly anything is now. Greek chaos
also meant a yawn. The yawn
to begin with. A gap in something,
sudden vacancy in the middle of a face,
a nothing where there had been something.
Then we get over it and start again,
our lips barely open in the tiny gaps called speech.

15 February 2009
How I become a different one when I am you,
how you don’t like it much then—
just because you wear a yellow dress
and live in the sky doesn’t give me the right
to fondle the light. Sinister synaesthesias
I demand. But you insist on normal things.
And you get your way. Until the night.

15 February 2009
But was there a different animal
our wars of religion our small
languages fighting against empire
my Latvian friend in a wooden house
with grapevines all over the door

and I knew how to walk in its body
and bite with its teeth all times
breaking apart beneath me, a raft
I rode that soon my body was
until the eveningland was gone

and we were underlings of the stars?
Anywhere there is a door
there is a house. Anywhere there is a breath
it turns sooner or later into language.
And that is all the animal we are.

15 February 2009
Times to be late
and a lover heading home
like any other river
greedy for the sea

but a river mouth is all
anxiety, the coming
together is not easy—
far out at sea

the drift of Mississippi silt
is still to be seen
they tell me but they
are likely lying like all lovers.

16 February 2009
Just because a thing is automatic doesn’t mean it’s easy to do. Death for instance.

No, death is not a thing, that’s your mistake. Death is just a rehearsal for something even harder when you sleep like the sun in the sky.

16 February 2009
A STOLE

around your neck
satin, purple, claiming
to be a priest, to ease
the sins off dying folk
with this sad ribbon—

we are all mere agents
of our costumes
and we hate it that we know it
they way everyone hates clowns.

16 February 2009
What time does to music
is weird. Almost as strange
as the other way round.

16.11.09
So long to think
this thought
the music helps.

16.II.09
ARS POETICA

So the thing is you live fast
and pretty thick
and write quick.

It doesn’t take
long to set the words down
it takes a long time to get the words,

just standing around,
seeing too much, eating,
sleeping in the cold desert.

16 February 2009