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Incidents of worship.
Who the gods are
varies with the beholder,
*holder of the gods.*
So you make your pantheon
by sheer observation
attending to the many shapes
that make you worship,

make you long to say them
and say to each: You mean this
and I love you for it
and will serve you all my life
and will be your work in this world.

Then you set above your desk
images of them, studying them
night and morning it seems
you are studying the world.
You ask questions and they speak
things in your head,

clear enough, and these you share
with your friends, why not,
they’re in the world too,
they need the same answers
you do. But not all.
There are some questions
closer to you than skin
and these your gods discuss
in wind-shifted leaves,
nothing to report, light,
thunder in far prairies.

12 March 2009
meant for you to see how
to use sight is it better
live where see the mountain
or on the mountain see
only endless landscape
away and nothing close
and the ground falls away
on every side but the seeing!
Vermont on one horizon
the other Pennsylvania
what are they just names
in the blue distance here
the sun in your eyes.

12 March 2009
Those mountains over there are just as close
as all the friends I’ve lost to death or other intrigue,
Could they one day come to mean me
the way I mean myself, mourn myself, already
half vanished into the distances from which I came
those blue hills eyes of my mother, Paul Blackburn’s eyes?

12 March 2009
AN AGITATED WITNESS ATTENDS COURT

Ask me questions till you run out,
my orgasms will answer you, sheer delight
(you see right through it) of answering!
Ask, ask, I can’t wait to tell the truth
or lie or make it up whichever comes first,
ask, ask, I am in this world exclusively
to attend to your questions. Asking
is your honor, answering is all I mean.
Why are your bailiffs so slow to pay attention?
Shouldn’t a court recorder be transcribing even this?

12 March 2009
They don’t understand at all what their bodies are. They are single sentences of immense length it takes forever to read and parse and understand. To know one body fully is to know everything.

12 March 2009
It wants us to ask
questions about each other
not the sun and moon
or we are them and then
we can answer truly

it wants to know us
as we know ourselves
into each other
the spill of meaning
the skin know itself

the other knows as well
it is no accident
it wants us to know
by asking and by saying
the skin of words

tonguetied witness.

12 March 2009
When is it time to be now?
we have so many choices
I’m only talking about what you can
take inside at night
yourself a womb of streets
everybody perspiring, the quest
of traffic and the quick of come.
It all is as it always is.
The names change, the words
get other tone-rows and the songs
get other words and the sun
does its grammar overhead.
We guess our way from bed to bed.

But you knew that a thousand
years ago why tell me again?
How do you know what I knew when?
And your thousand is different from mine
and there are no years

just ampersands knotting together
one thing after another
until we’re done. Or one.
All the disasters come after. The spiritual landscapes between the Harlem Ship Canal and the Westchester line more complex than a virgin’s dream. The Virgin’s dream. But I am virgin also of these places, sprinkle salt on all my wounds.

13 March 2009
But I wanted to see what it said
so I broke the glass
wanted to smell the spring
so I dug up the lawn
but did anything listen?

Not even one.
The blackbirds are back
that’s all they knew,
the science of arrival
is the deepest art of all.

13 March 2009
One more word before remember.
Slip it into your calendar
some people don’t like a slippery feeling,
like the rough wedge in.  A day
fits inside a day.  You come
inhabit my hour.  Then you get mad
and leave behind a risky quiet
like when a dog stops barking
but any minute might start again.
That’s what I get from a conversation—
I don’t belong to you enough.

13 March 2009
All that coming towards
and then Passover
running through the trees
almost naked with spring
to get away from the book
that infinite family
the dinner all word and no food
you don’t want to be Jewish

you don’t want to be you.

13 March 2009
Between the curtain and the sunny window
the new amaryllis splayed in scarlet
against the pale cloth, its own petals
also diaphanous, shade inside a shade.

13 March 2009
HE

And for a moment wondered
where those scars had come from
on his palms.
Then he remembered.

13 March 2009
Till there is none left to say
then say it
green as you care to

since the telescope the moon is shy
all our invasions
cherries on the apple tree

I give you plump apricot
whole in your mouth
turns into language

o god please talk to me.

14 March 2009
How long anything has to go decides
the instrument is full of its own sagesse,
scalpels teach the surgeon’s hands
and you take me to the other side of my mind
where I have nothing to rescue or defend
just noise with silence in it and sunshine
vague in the branches of a busy tree.
And when you have me there, such
arguments of energy and flesh, what
curving politics of grace! Exclaiming
is better than explaining any day,
catches the child mind and makes it stop
thinking. Get up and go, beyond the usual
equations, to the land without comfort,
without sin, when sense is made
only by the senses, and language,
that live fish in your fingers, begins.

14 March 2009
Waiting at the edge, sedge, a kind of grass,
Egypt out the door.
How strange we are, we kept the old gods
and changed the religion—
Isis forgives us time after time
no matter what we call Her.
Isis is always. Isis is only. Isis is.

14 March 2009
HOME FROM A WALK

I went without money
without passport even

all the way into the afternoon
and came back home

a hundred years later
my own half-acre

no cat, no own shadow
even on my own floor.

14 March 2009
I called him after his voice
to say
what love would not let
myself avow

I am a scrap torn
from your book,
listen to me,
written in a distant stronghold of your mind
while all the really smart
crows are flaunting it around out here.

14 March 2009
Different typefaces explain nothing. It’s up to you again, kiddo,
put the imagined stress on the word you want the words to say to you you’re in charge of what it means.

14 March 2009
Hushed colors of old rugs
washing them fades them even more
and the sun bleaches what is left.
Still, it was red and you know it,
green leaf on sand fallen,
you know it, the infinite variety
never mute. The sky
seems to be crying out
now not just the crows
not just the sun. The blue
ordinary of the wall
is what is calling. But
only the colors hear.

14 March 2009