PLACES I HAVE TAKEN MY STAND

Lived in Brooklyn fought in Manhattan
in the long wars against neglect
battled in the fierce dream space of the Minettas
the bland blond serenity of the upper east
ripe moon in mink dawn over Hellgate
stench of clean clothes on Seventh Avenue
the balavants pushing heavy rollers down
the ugliest of all the city’s streets,
I pick these hearths for my hard.

I’m an American I early learned
to fight my wars on other people’s turf.
Just go there. Being there is battle enough.

1 July 2009
Make it snappy this isn’t memory
it’s a box with broken toys in it
the air in the Clark Street station
shoved out of the tunnel by oncoming train
soft dark breeze around Amy Goldin’s knees.

1 July 2009
I say everything too
long or too short
long ago I lost between.

1.VII.09.
Lost that face
found another
our pleasures
turn us to stone.

2 July 2009
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Analyze the obvious
it keeps telling me,
everything is here
to be known.
Nothing has an agenda
of its own—all
things you can perceive
are signs.
We leave them behind us
for one another.
Trackless are we gone.

2 July 2009
The sound of a bird
singing at 3 A.M.
could be anything.
Tired eyes
hypothesize.

2.VII.09.
It has to be longer
to say the simplest thing.

Almost all the lilies have opened.

Flowers from an unknown tree
stand in a blue vase in a stranger’s house.

2 July 2009
I have to know more about
this mind who dreams me nights
and sometimes hurts in the day—
arcané liturgist, hidden puppeteer.

2 July 2009
Asking about it
Because it comes
Raw to market
In baskets of tomatoes
From Samarkand—
Now you know why
A rabbi has to have
An ordinary job before
He can be taken seriously
By those who work
For a living. Or not so
Ordinary—silversmith
Coppersmith bookbinder
Diamond cutter printer
Of beautiful thick books.

2 July 2009
LA GLOIRE

Glory doesn’t spell itself with letters
it spells in darkness with hard deed
you never see but let the sun come up
later, when everyone’s lost hope.

This you do. This too does you.
And when the majestic operation’s done
people look up and say Oh it’s the sun.

3 July 2009
== == == ==

You make your own paradise
stone by dreary stone
or the salt green of leaves that don’t
get much rain— or get too much—
these too you bring, always
trying to remember why.

3 July 2009
A little daylight on the man.
He makes an angle with the sky.
How do you say ‘slump’ in French
as a teenage girl does it on a couch
or an old man against an imaginary wall?

*Feare no more the heate of the Sunne*

but what of the cold in that other place
when that wall falls. When language stops.

3 July 2009
Waiting for something
when you’re not waiting
is the best repose

You just don’t know—
imagine, you’re sitting there
with your head in your hands
snug and dark, surprised a little
to be so close to yourself,
you even smell your skin, your breath
as if you too were somebody else

Later you look up, the sun is shining
through the trees, valid
inferences abound. But you know
it’s all too soon. You lower
your face into your palms again.

3 July 2009
DRAWLING PARAKEETS

I recall your cages—
featherdusty with cuttlebone and why—
it was a living thing or two, blue,
hemmed in a box, jiving
so I didn’t understand their
slow frantic little speeches,

I also didn’t understand the old
woman she seemed to me
who kept them, talked to them
in a tongue not of birds and not of men,
a Baltimore Latin, maybe—

in fact I understand nothing
and still do. What they said
didn’t go anywhere, did it?
Did I?

Traps everywhere
and so attractive. Deliver us
from easy.

Maybe they don’t know
it is a cage or they are in it,
maybe they can bring to mind
no other condition. At the risk
of getting ultimate, I wonder can I.

Is it always like this. The voice
on the phone pretends to come
from somewhere else. Sometimes
the taste of somewhere else comes back
to haunt the mouth you try to talk from.

4 July 2009
I’m glad I stopped making sense.
Anything that makes sense
has been said a thousand times before.

4 July 2009
If I have no opinions
there’s nothing to pin
a footnote on,
what I don’t know
I didn’t read in a book.
And it would be crazy to think
or think the world around me
is just a commentary
on the quiet in my head
when these words stop.

4 July 2009
MUSES AT THE GATE

and all I need
is strong notice them
and then the grammar of their skin
analyzes everything.
They give me to know.
To speak to them
makes me speak to you.
They wander lonely in your shade.

5 July 2009
As if on a swing set wondering
if one fine up
there’ll never be a down

and there you’d go
backwards maybe into cosmoses
we never turn around to see.

5 July 2009
How the disgusting music
flows from a nice man’s fingers
makes me doubt the earth.

5.VII.09.
All this while I didn’t know
you liked a smaller bowl.
Blood and sand, a bullfight
in the hand, all
the Trojan War in one
window full of mazy sunlight
sieved through window screen—
domestic: our whole story
happens in every house,
between kitchen and bedroom
the history of the world.
There is so much of you to know.

5 July 2009