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Could this be the music heard once
in the synagogue I never entered
where a god I never knew was sung
loud by men who said that He was good
and women listened? And now
I hear what sounds that way, a single
violin without a single consonant
and yet it says. Its long hard vowels
insinuate hallelujah. And what that means
the angel lounging at my busy elbow
ceaselessly explains. These
are the days of Tobias, the fact
that we can hear means God is good.
All this noise is just conversation.

16 September 2008
Can I find an old sense before form

find an array beyond it,
a disposition of viols in concordant space
that rabbit on and on

to fuse your quick unclothings so
that old Hotel Chelsea musix run to ground

a panting maiden trapped in megaHertz
I sing thee breed? Poetry is bling?

17 September 2008
Wanting to break something
and being the only thing around—
danger of waking early
when the world’s alone.

Danger of precocious identity.

—that ailment of celebrities
who are before they finish becoming,
the only lines of cleavage
left in them are them.

17 September 2008
Old Italian music. Stradella. Whose name I’ve known all my life from an old shellac record of the overture (Suppé?) to an operetta of that name about his life. And even now I know nothing but what I hear. If even that.

17.IX.08
But carrying someone with you
would be a way of speaking.

Praying even. San Cristobal
with the whole gospel on his shoulder.

Carry truth that way through all the rivers
the way our alchemists

later, so much later, coax
flame to swim to them through the water.

17 September 2008
Trying again to begin
or begin again
the river of nevering—
oh we cross that all the time.

17.IX.08
Sometimes it looks
and things used to—

paper flower, scarlet,
  winter coming,
  noise of el train over my head—

the musculature of everything he meant
precise beneath the lovers’ clothes
inferred—
  touched
  only by the will’s wits,
the mind’s long greasy fingers—

the eye and hand debating, how
one contour pleasing both
gives independent energy to each.

A dark skirt a pale blouse.
Wintering in the warm idea.

17 September 2008
Different edges.

Different speeds through the toll booth
amounting to a smelly little car
on a great curve through the sky.
rubber clouds, and water down there
made of something grey and blue
like a love-bruiise or a civil war
and gulls shit down on the windshield of
because the world is real

even though me in my car
only going from one side of the river
to the other, where else,
as if there were coming and going

to be done and we could do it and be gone.

18 September 2008
What is a love bruise?

The car, the triumphal chariot of humility, is speaking only for itself, goes only as it goes, takes up only its own space, something I look at a car it makes me cry

the simplicity of it, the fatedness of it, born only to be bought and go and die.

18 September 2008
HISTORY OF THIS LEAF I’M LOOKING AT

1.
It will crumble
before the word
comes to say it

and the speaker
crumbles too
before the word’s
forgotten

but that’s not
the point, that’s
future and this
is this,

the glance
backwards
into the mirror
one sees the moles
on one’s back

the iffy patches
of a life
one has been,

one sees a leaf.
2.

There were countesses once in my family
too, thin-lipped, not easy to be friendly with,

there were leaves
on a high branch
far above my head

I wondered how their blood
so thin and cold
made its way
into my hot head

every love affair
a heart attack
every welcoming postcard a chateau of prose.
3.

But that’s not what one means by leaf.


A tower with holes in it—ouzels go in and out.

Crying out loud. Is that a leaf? You call that a leaf? A leaf yet, or already?

Is it ready yet? Is it?
Driving there windows open
wide to catch late summer breeze
he thought of castles in his dream
the empty road when all at once
a crow flew in, was in the car
all over his eyes between him
and the windshield, fluttering
wildly over his hands, guiding
him hard, he braked, car stopped.
The crow was gone. The castle
was in front of him, a ruin
now, a little girl playing in the gloom.

18 September 2008
Finding our way through
a bone or barnyard – these
scraps for the wild dogs and these
for a land beyond the sea.

Translate me. Then it was evening.
The hosts of the Amelekites
preyed on my consciences
—the good, the easy, the conniving—
their ghosts stood before me
in God’s name slain—
so said our chronicles.

Then it was evening, the lark
shut up in the meadow,
the gallant owl courted in the ravine.
I was a victim of my appetite.

Then it was evening. History
ended here, a dead mole, soft,
my toecap prodded it
hoping for a sign of life.
There is no leaf. Ferns
were bronzing towards winter.

Then it began again. Then it was evening
and my hand shook, imitating
sensitive people I had known
or old or ebriated.
Then it was evening and I said alone.

Translate me. The saints
in their bonnets stand along the wall,
virgins one side martyrs the other.
Do not bear witness to or for me
by your dying though, but give me
your living breath, speak for me,
tell lies, be a poet, be a spokesman
for anything that lets you free,

even by denying me you live to praise
and dignify my doctrine, so: Be!
Incarnate in this flesh it gave you
or I made you, like a whole long year
of Uranus, or Neptune if you can.

Then it was evening. I shuddered
at the sudden chill
resolved to live.

Scapegoats scudded past me,
they found a woodland pasture
safe from wilderness.
In solitary friendship I persist
touching no part of what I feel.

Then it was evening. The brittle
politicians tried to bend again
but this time broke. The market
emptied, quiet Roma busied
with their gasoline in oil cans,
their clucking hens,
then they swept the shadows clear
into the porticoes and slept in arches.

I was alone with the wreckage of my speed
like Henry James dictating as he died.

The words outlast
their referents,
dear God let me be seeds.

19 September 2008
1. The day needs me to recite
   but if I were silent master who would begin
   it would be the other all over again
   every’s castle bricks rain down
   we build a cloud and let it go

2. But is there no lasting here no dogs no avocado trees
   for wherever these people went they brought a sun-baked cruelty with
   and all the dialects of death

3. But isn’t that your prejudice only smell of your own house the others sniff as they pass along your window open autumn and no breeze and oats for supper?
4. 
My denial is my decency
(shadow of the window screen
moiré on curved paper
fine mesh catch such fish)

5. 
Something from the sky again
a salt lick for
a great unseen green horned stag
who honks above us
and leaps the roof beam easy

I craved to stand at the rim of the meadow
and lick one too.

6. 
But childhood master
is a time of fevered cravings no?
and all the life still to go

and nothing answered?

7. 
This is the answer—
they will taste the salt
only those who kiss my lips.

20 September 2008
Could there be another
in time to say so?

The shape of the instrument
determines the sound

thereof. Eagle,
be at peace in heaven

the great earth eye
sees you. Woman,

attend your rock.
The season changes

out of music into oak
and then the silk

remembers shaping
the frame that shaped it.

Contour is the only
thing that speaks.

And never answers.

20 September 2008
Too late for the morning
like a man with a prize pig

or later, among apple trees
even, a sparkle left

on dull leaves. Forgive me.
Every word we speak

is asking for absolution.
Or refuses it. Too late

for evening, the fruit
almost tasteless with cold,

no warmth in the mouth
even, to forgive the world.

21 September 2008