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MANDRAKE

I’ve seen you dried
or soaking fork-footed
in elixir

then I saw you live
flourishing on a hill
in France

I pulled you up
a little root of you
and did not go mad

unless this is madness,
one word after another
until apocalypse,

I did not hear you
scream the way
they say you do

unless this is you
screaming now
in anything I say.

1 October 2008
Could the color be the leaf
and all that green
just time’s intensest
cramming a whole year into
four hot months of glow?

1 October 2008
Some surds are waiting to be said. Some is always waiting. Some is your best hope and some are coming to make you feel better.

Feel more inside and outside. Waiting for them is how you know that they are really who they are and not some others. Waiting is knowing.

Some others are always a problem but not necessarily the problem some solve. Some you’re waiting for are also waiting for you. Some are safe in a garden. Some is a garden too.

1 October 2008
Five fat livid plums
on a little blue plate
with an apple none too
fresh balancing on top—

are you a verb
or an animal?
Is this time itself
or just something to eat?

1 October 2008
But there was something left between—

an honest man walking through his woods
wondering what makes them his.

Rain horses around an old house.
Trouble coming?

Or just age?
The wood is creaking to explain.

Or just complain.

1 October 2008
Sometimes children sleep
and dream that they’re grown-ups,
how can that be?
How can we dream of what we never were?
Unless we always are?

Unmask this masquerade of childhood!

1 October 2008
POETRY READING

Let’s suppose there are no books.

And there’s a man in front of you
saying words.
Since there are no books
he never wrote one and you never read him anyhow,

he could be anyone.
Why would he do that,
stand there and say something to you,

pleasantly even, or urgently, or maybe even
as if he had said the same things
a thousand times before and no one listened

or they listened and then forgot?
Why would he do that,
what does he want?

Sell you something? Persuade you
to vote for somebody
or enlist in some terrible army?
Does he want you to believe in his god
or his atheism, does he want you to walk with him,
talk with him, keep him company?

Does he want you to tell him something too?
Does he want you to teach him silence?
Does he want you to forget?

2 October 2008
All the news that’s good for you
a saint embarrassed for a sinner
how much spinach wasted on his plate
she could morph to emeralds and jade
to loop about some other empress
nude but for such bling –
be gaudy, girl, don’t waste the dark
God gave you to illuminate,
don’t sit glum in the arms of your emotions
like an illiterate with a letter in his hand.

2 October 2008
Forgive me, I could not keep up a blog, can barely meet you for a coffee near some hour specified—

I live in a different kind of time, the clock’s other neighborhood, the other side of now.

2 October 2008
Can it even try to be me when
I don’t even know what
you’re drinking on the phone
till the words get confused
with the buzz in my hearings
hearing them as if my ears.
There are so many woods
a carpenter needs to know
and only ten silly numbers
to measure them, how many legs
do you want me to handle
on the way to a table, Nazareth?
Questions are too much like rivers
in the desert, no traveler
wants to be far from them
and sometimes they peter out
until the monsoon remembers us
suddenly like God I imagine
but then I have walked the day dry
waiting for the shadow to turn
back into the face and the echo
acquire soft fat lips to shape
a different message at the shy
interview of my ears, as if.
And then the count goes on
you can call it music if you have to
the way the birds do, claiming
an hereditary Hegel in their heads
makes them think out loud the way they do.

3 October 2008
Having been trapped in the gloom of gleam
the place where the lamp can’t illume itself
we can’t see our faces, come to accept
the plausible falsifications of the mirror,
the honest failure of the camera but
close your eyes and you’re invisible.
Not a clue to who. Not whom—
you know all the voluptuous accusatives
but never the humble nominative
that keeps saying aye-aye to everything.
And whose face is it that you sometimes
some nights wake with, totter down the hall
rubbing your eyes to make its image fade?

3 October 2008
The old books I used to know 
know me now.
All their information 
informed me. I forgot 
all the details into myself. 
Where they force me to speak 
as if I really knew.

3 October 2008
Surveyor on the road today I saw.

Each day the cherry orchard is chopped down in my head all over again.

c. 3 October 2008
REMNANT

I am what is left

out of you.

3 October 2008
THE TREE TO BE

Slow everything down.
I am a man, a principle
of satisfactions. I am owed
to a certain tree, an ash
long ago cut down. Or fall’n
on a winter night sick from wind
sprawled beside my house
it said: Now you live me
for I am done with myself.

4 October 2008
Or there was something else in the middle of the stream beginning a conversation that has no other shore it all is here alas as the baker said to the ghost of his bread the powdery damp yeast that knows us so well – Metambesen he calls it citing an ancient Indian he never met a candle in his hand a flurry of wind not big enough to puff the flame out just enough to stand there in wet feet o the beautiful ankles of young humans he thought those alone brought him quick to us from the stars.

4 October 2008
It may actually have been a flying saucer
or just a woman in a tight dress, sequin bodice
hued pomegranate, a kind of midnight
or a gathering window – bluish cast of gleam
putty stuck in between. O roses, roses!
I liked the picture of the thing you sent me,
all those dinosaurs slithering down,
the sky an open mouth, I think like that
about you too, as thou dost me, amazement
forced into such quiet wool, look, a hawk.

4 October 2008
Catching up
is no sort of preposition
after the fact.

The apartment houses of East Berlin
with stores on the street floor—
doner kebab, radio, clocks and jewelry—
I bought a watch
to tell a different kind of time.

Grey stone wide avenue stretching straight north
from the big station up into where I never went.

4 October 2008
EXILE’S RETURN

Is it true what they say about the parrots of Flatbush how they came as guests in people’s cages then escaped and perch now on power lines along Church Avenue keep warm by the transformers all winter with sex and seed out of somewhere,

it is true that once on the grass by Medgar Evans Community College in Crown Heights that used to be a high school I went to I found a dead snake I didn’t know there were any snakes in Brooklyn although an old woman on my block kept goats in the backyard and an olive tree her husband wrapped up in burlap when the last tomatoes every summer got gathered and eaten

and I once under the Belt Parkway heard a loud honking they told me was a bittern a bird I thought was only in England like literature like everything else I thought was never in Brooklyn turned out was in Brooklyn like me and whatever is anywhere is everywhere as long as it is really here which is why it’s so important
for me to know now and you
tell me is it true the parrots
red and blue and green and grey
scream from lamp post to tree
their crazy eyes the words
they learned from us to speak
shout at us now from every
thing we thought was cold and
silent and safe and steel and
far away, but now instead
the parrots of Brooklyn?

5 October 2008
By the railroad. By the siding.
Hard hum
of the food-bearing freight car
all night long.
Refrigerator midnight
moonless. People
twisted together in jalopy.
What is memory for?

5 October 2008