10-2008

octD2008

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Stay home. Nothing
waits for you out here
where I will paint
leaves all afternoon
and let them fall.
Float. Nothing
needs you. Now
is the time you have yourself
been waiting for, the now
of nada, the quiet sky.
You don’t even have to listen.
You have already been said.
As much as we toured a car the moon kept breaking
no line so narrow a foot could fail to follow it all the way
the light! the light! the café beyond the bridge turned out
to be a store where they sold lights and the lights were on all night
and nothing open Paris 1954 the war was close behind me then
and that was broken too the man I was the later on the man
who drove a car into the night looking for a naked animal to own
and kept falling for dawn again fifty years following a light
only shone and nothing shown you still haven’t seen the strange
thing came out of the broken moon.

16 October 2008
FACE

The size of the eyes makes me laugh.
It is a child
in a woman’s face
artfully reclaimed.
The commodity of innocence new bought. Look.
Let your lip softly low.
The eyes so big can’t even tell the color, they are the color of whatever you want me to think, I think it, sincerely, can’t guess even what’s going on in my own mind. Eyes as Dante says, seas men drown in all too easy. And why not, you ask, what good did it ever do them to be dry? I quote Heraclitus desperately, It is death for a soul to be wet. Exactly, you say, come play in me, there is something that comes alive only when the soul has died, one other mystery, an infancy you too can be born in when you sink in me.
I see them pass
I watch them carefully
I study I compare
I remember and imagine

And have no clue at last
to what’s on their minds
really, the people,
the people who pass by,

and this ignorance of mine
is the freedom and greatness of the world.

17 October 2008
cabbages big as searchlights
at the base of the flagpole
purple ornamental and who will eat

or eat the flag or drink the sky or
all the things that seem proposed
for us to do before we die

17 October 2008, Hopson
Whose heretic are you
who wanted to know

Is there some sign on my back
a sudden permission
daddied down to the world
to do and do well
what could never before?

Be strong like a mouth.
Or pray all night long
the deep muffled snores
mean God is speaking
heavy in you now

then wake to tell
even this. No need to
tell sleep from waking
or famously over a meadow
is it frost is it sun
is it just someone?

18 October 2008
THE SIGNIFIER

When they say Giordano Bruno was burnt at the stake for revealing the mystery of signs they mean the sun rises mortal every morning but no one is supposed to notice it or understand.

18 October 2008
VALPARAISO

A place it seems
used to be in mind
when I was a kid

now I remember
how much I liked
the sound of it

Never got around
to visiting
any of its towns,

Chile, is it, Indiana?
And just now
hearing the word

in my head, sounds
as if it means
Valley of Paradise

a place I’ve never
visited either
but also never left.

18 October 2008
Not be angry
stump of a good sugar maple
cut down in its prime.

My fault. Fear,
not politics. Wood,
not words. And still

I’m left peaceful
stupid in all these red leaves.

18 October 2008
Uncanny resemblance? All resemblance is uncanny, unnerving. Nothing looks like itself alone. Whose face is that in the mirror?

18 October 2008
I am lost in silence
inside all the words that speak me
or I speak. Never sure
who’s talking. Who that is
—hiding? hidden?—
in the silences inside.

18 October 2008
A PIECE OF BREAD

A piece of bread
enough for breakfast
fast a piece of light
enough for a sky.

A piece of bread
and a piano
when the notes
come one by one
they work as words.

Give to hear.
Fingers at the keyboard
fingers holding limp
a piece of store-bought bread.
a piece of bread.

The natural dyslexia of evening
silences the bread.
Whatever it is
it often breaks. It is fast
but you can hear it.
You can hold it in your hand.

19 October 2008
ETERNAL SONG

Brick scat
on blacktop

around the construction
site the *chanting*

place our friends
overseas seem to call it.

Everything that goes
up has to stay up.

The voice lifted
never comes down.

19 October 2008
OCTOBER FAIR

Words coming.
Words combing hair.

I sift my fingers
through your hair

as your hands
rest knuckle-deep

in sheep fleece still
on its animal.

How warm
you said the horns

are and I thought such things
must have blood in them.

19 October 2008
SHEEPISH

Market weather, I tried, just look
at all the deep-fleeced sheep at the fair
we had to talk a half a mile away.
Cars wait on line too. The miracle though
is just the sight of you your hand
touching through the fence the dense
compact wooliness of them, brown jacobs
dusty corriedales, pin-shanked cheviots.
And the pleasure you take from the touch
I take from the quiet pleasure of
seeing you touch them. Quiet will.

19 October 2008
THE PENITENT

As if I had spoiled something
you know,
just a strange
feeling in the forehead
over the eyes
like the feel on the face when you
open the fridge
no more
than that, a sort of emptiness,
and always you.

Linking, from what I knew
even from the beginning carefully
or easily ever, all the way
to one of those transiencies those
absences I pleadingly call ‘now’,
linking, as if, I had,
in all that,
not you,
dropped something,

erg, an erg of information, could it,
a jot left out of tittle,

a bruise

adrift from its skin.
What.
What have I done.
A man who has broken his word
has nothing to say.

Is it that,
is it simple as sin,
deceit, crafty policy,

and then one night the dead come back
floating, each on its little skiff,
putting into the crowded harbor
and one by one they step ashore
and each tells me again the lie I told?

Is it?

Or is there another wrong
wrapped up in weather,
something we, not just me, or even you,
are supposed to understand
just by opening our eye, yawning, morning’s
there, there to be taken in, there
to evangelize the waking mind
with sudden revelations of the absolute,
while we’re still naked, unwashed,
shag-minded, corrupt with sleep?
I mean us all but it means only me.
How the truth hurts.
You know it’s true because it hurts,
the empty box that smells of ancient glue,
the eyes that see but won’t see me—

like yesterday among the goats in Rhinebeck
watching them watch you with their lustrous eyes,
some blue even, some olive black,
but they did not seem to see,
not even you,
the gleam of their eyes like the gleam on their fleece,
some vision that had nothing to do with seeing.

I want to take
    the little train to Martinville
and see all the aspects of your face at once
whoever you finally turn out to be,
if ever,
    and then another mile,
another empty chapel on the godless plain
in love with birches and maples and farewells

because good-bye is such a sacrament,
we almost found a new religion
we almost drown in seeing,
all around us  
everything knows its name.

What is the wrong thing I did  
there are so many which is this

my head kneels down hard against a word  
and croons blunt misereres,  

    I confess,  
confess.

    All reminiscence is a sort of sin,  
is it that,  
    the keen vague taste of what could have been,  
a skin I never touched  
that still gives light?

Drumbeat autumn, the trees in uniform.  
This sound you may or may not hear  
hurrying at least in my ears like woods in winter

the drone is all the wrongs I ever did  
remembering out loud in me.

And there our penitent falls silent.  
The priest long ago stopped listening,  
drowses or frankly sleeps,  
    his clean
old fingers fingering the purple stole
such men put on
to lift our sins with
and lodge them, God knows where,
in some other memory,

    a battered shoebox
    in Aunt Celie’s attic,
my great-grandmother’s mother’s photograph,
could it be,
    a parrot on its perch
behind her—
    everything pretends to be dead
or still or fixed or far away.

    Whereas
you can’t get away with anything,
stranger. Allergic to dust in a dying world,
allergic to sunshine, metal white and gold,
the sound of bees, elevators,

shoelaces break in your weak hands,
you choke on lettuce and won’t drink wine,

you animal, you brink of mind.

20 October 2008
When we meet we should talk about the weather because it’s always there and holds your hand sort of as we hunt for common ground in the parched badlands of what we think we think. It doesn’t matter anyhow, it’s always raining or not, something’s going, the wind is blowing, some days the sun just gets stuck in the trees never gets dark and people go for drinks. That’s you and me I guess in this histoire, like any old movie with ukuleles. Anything else is too dangerous, right, hearts and hands and dreams and all that lingo. This piece is too short to be a sonnet. This piece was too short to be a sonnet.

20 October 2008