6-2007

junH2007

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SOME PEOPLE

Some people never come to the door. Some do. It is an Irish thing or a matter of the newspaper to snatch it from the rainy steps or some business with the dog. Some use the door as commentary, “sporting the oak” they used to say meaning I am closed on purpose. Leave me alone. For the season. I am an animal too much hunted, I am small game, vermin, scarcely a rabbit. Hence I need a door to conceal my uncelebrity. He said, and I was waiting for some translation into our own case, this situation, some pals at the waterfront, but no. Some people internalize their doors he said. This is turning into psycho-babble I said, meaning You’re getting warm, back off already, camarado, we don’t want to quarrel, it scares the fish, the sea spread out for us wider and wider, not a door in sight.

27 June 2007
Cuttyhunk
Why are poems suddenly people talking? Shouldn’t they aspire to be people listening? One at a time the words come down from heaven. Dove. Hydrangea. Blue. Haze. 

Four entered the garden. It is the same story every time. The one who comes out constructs the history of every garden. What he says becomes the truth. There is no other. We stand peering into the trees, wondering even if we would know how to see.

27 June 2007
Cuttyhunk
LINDENWOOD

The calm of home. The here.
To be among itself
the thousand
pieces of my life one stone.

28 June 2007
I don’t have to do the other thing, only this thing. Smooth as remembering. The polished table, the magnifying glass. Be big again, little world. The distances he claimed now hem us in. A word named you, a thing took away your name. I would expect it to be a kind of air, bluish, if it had any religion at all.

28 June 2007
TAKE IT EASY

The music box plays the famous magician displaying his workshop. It is like taking off your shoes after a long day, or it is like a bird you're proposing to study taking off before you're done focusing. The bare branch. “Situations change.” Love does linger but in the strangest crannies. On quiet islands noise hurts more. Here the highway is the jungle. Alarums of baffled infantry campaigning their commute. Windows open to let out the drumbeat they twitch south encouraged by. I have not yet let myself feel how glad I'm home.

28 June 2007
She was dressed to be caressed.
But a touch asks too much.
Every body means to bless.
My old friend the alpinist
is on his deathbed. But on this
island there are no squirrels,
no ordinary crows. The deer
are bred to attack pedestrians,
they stand their ground like
Brookline matrons rigid with
entitlement. You said coming
across the border into New York
fel t like leaving Switzerland
for amiable France, a deeper
country, with more give in it.
But countries we can name
are not really places at all,
shadows of feelings, breath
from no one’s mouth. But here
there are plenty of squirrels,
I’ve got my eye on a couple
over by the linden tree, and sky
is loud with crowful meanings.
We came from a distant planet
and must soon return, carrying
the *Times* under our arm, a sign
of real prestige when we get home,
proof that we have been somewhere
and learned how to be secular
at last, be part of the establishment
even, of otherness itself, no matter
how insignificant a role we played.
Speak for yourself—my aura
is ample as a golf umbrella, wing-
spread like a lammergeier’s
poised to snatch a sheep. Sounds
just like you now you mention it.
Yesterday we crossed a path
in the mountains he used to use,
I suddenly thought of him, his shoes,
his walking stick. He had in fact
already died, this very day. But why
do they say very when they only mean now?
HOME

Some, or so many. Miracles.
Marry me yes. Let the sun
rise one more time, ok? Touch
this.
And then at noon
to thank the night for remembering
us, for being on its way. Home.
The miracle of home.

Not heimat,
not climate, this. Just this.
Wherever it is
you are.

29 June 2007
HEIMAT

Elderly gent in dark blue sedan has HEIMAT on his license plate. I swoon away into bluish reveries of Eichendorff and Riefenstahl. Poughkeepsie, the mile of mall below the cemetery. Is he just Bavarian hence can if he wished go home, or Nazi with no home at all except the internet and Paraguay? I hope the former – imagine Germany right now, potato fields near Potsdam, under the pale accusation of the concrete blocks Guest Workers are housed in, who at twilight in their windows read Turkish tabloids that tell sweet lies about their heimat too.

2.
But what do I know. Everybody entitled to own illusions, me first. Everybody has a foreign accent here, weird. I was born on this street but you’d never know it. Candle flame and dripping wax, never ski in nylon socks— that’s what my German lover said, I said I never ski at all, what a docile child you are my lover said! But are we home yet is what I want to know.

29 June 2007
To be at home then
like a chessman on the board.
one piece of the action, defined
by how I am permitted to move.

But some hand – we could call it
a child’s hand to quiet
theological anxiety – could
reach over and move me where it would,

move all of us,
with no one to care at all
about the rules of the game,
pick us up and scatter us,

pound us on one another
till pawn breaks queen and the bishop
loses the little knob on his hat
and there we are. This also is home.

29 June 2007
ALCHEMY

A process of refining sunlight
that strips it of extraneous colors and textures

(incident upon weather, on topography;
thriftily, they will be used later
to render livable certain otherwise
untenable structures among men – see ‘Art’)

leaving the light itself alone, which can be conceived
with the aid of the following analogies:
liquid mercury without the mercury;
a flame without fire or heat;
the sea without a single wave in or on it;
a white lion leaping at you from the snow;
smile a child sees just before she falls asleep.

Lo! The dictionary has begun
and already we’re at the first letter
and the last word has been uttered.
Look in the sky: you may see an image
of a wise old king swallowing – or trying to swallow –
his radiant young son, who does not struggle at all.

Call this: the mysterious compliance
by which the world is made,
the final secret of the light itself.

We sustain ourselves by and on and for
the child inside. Buddha nature—
you give birth to your mother at last.

30 June 2007
Orpheus can never look back at the real woman trailing behind him out of hell, the woman that anybody could see with ordinary eyes. Orpheus must keep his eyes firmly fixed on the imaginal Eurydice before him, towards whom he has struggled all his life. She is not imaginary, not at all, but realer than any mere apperency, than any momentary act of seeing. He must move always towards that perfect image of his wife, and so sustain himself and his song. If ever he turns back, that is, regresses into seeing his wife as an ordinary woman, she is lost. And he is lost.

30 June 2007