7-2007

julC2007

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NEW RULES

So let’s for once be strict about the colors—
Lucy wears a silver mask these days,
violet ink alone should be used to write down
every morning the dreams collected.
Another shade for what you dream in naps.
those alarming gaps in protestant consciousness,
sinister chasms of the afternoon. Nappez-vous?
But how dare you be formal with a dreamer,
every dreamer is the same as you, intimately,
didn’t you know that? Sorry, sweet,
I learned my grammar from bamboo,
I just rattle any way the wind persuades me
and it’s always soaking wet around my feet.
Grass doesn’t have feet. Précisément,
we all have bad accents when we speak the truth.

10 July 2007
GATE OF HORN

_Not the so much time to say it do—_
flarfly, like mimosa. Your spellcheck lied,
I still love you, a little, here is my picture,
with a typo where my mouth should be.

Mute evidence of some forgotten miracle,
something to do with skin. You know.
We were both absent from the same occasion
which somehow links us, doesn’t it,
it mates us, in both senses. Your guess
is a good deal better than mine even so—
you sleep more than I do so have more friends,
they come to you in the dark and tell you things.

On the other side, I mean, where they stand around
waiting for you to dream them. Airport
where we shuffled around just like them
waiting for hours for the plane from Houston.
the candidate, the whispered conversation with the dean.
Wearied consulting the MEULCS, never found out
what the letters stood for, where all the lost flights
are listed, dead girl friends, lost sparrows, Latin
as a spoken language, violets from Parma, winter.

See why it all seems so random, why
whatever floats across the mind is as wise
as any encyclopedia and more relevant
to our current uncomfortable situation,
morning trailing shreds of boring nightmare
into the fatal risk of meaning something.

11 July 2007
Did it wait by you?
A little. Thumbtacks,
remember them?
Keep it simple,
God is watching,

though there’s a lot to say
for pretending,
heroic dissimulation
in high place,
reporters wait
eager to be bamboozled

because lies
being made of language
fit language better
than truth does
which is made of everything,

lies make it easier to write down
what the war is almost saying
then pin it to the wall,
remember all you meant
when you came into the room
a lifetime ago when you believed.

11 July 2007
(Four Questions from Alana, verbatim)

What does that little wolf want?

And what is a pawn?

How does it look?

Why be the one in a room who knows the name of it?

11 July 2007

Answers propose themselves:

Any wolf wants always.
A pawn is the least thing you can touch, the throbbing minimum, the move.
It looks with its own eyes until it knows better.
If you ask it in its own name it will let you go

(28 July 2007)
When woke my eyes
they angels saw

skull light spilled
out beyond
the lampshade so

it lit in myriad
tiny scarletries
they shy they showed

and when I knew
that I was seeing
I saw no more.

11 July 2007
SLEEPING THROUGH THUNDER

I slept with the rain
the living loved me
long after woke
like an outbreath
to be born

I slept with the sound
around,
the thousand hands
of what I didn’t hear
caressed me.

II July 2007
Answering questions neatly
in squared-off simple lines

like tiny soldiers marching
on the dining table top
then suddenly the war is real

and all the bright enamel colors
turn a simple red

Is that sunshine
or even true?

12 July 2007
—What if all the girls you’ve gone with
gave you, each of them, a silver ring

and you had to wear all your rings,
all your memories on your simple fingers?

—But I am a girl,
I never went with girls,

I’d have no rings at all
or maybe only one

from when I stood
once in front of a mirror

and understood
a simple thing about myself.

12 July 2007
The exercise without the mind is null and dull. The mind without the muscle at least leaves traces on the fresco wall. Lift up your eyes to see the vacancy. You will live here happy as a loving word in somebody’s maybe mouth.

12 July 2007
That day we stared into each other’s eyes
and what we saw there, all the years
to come quick as our slow breath
we held and never blinked, never blinked
and saw and saw
till we were blue in the eyes
we saw where next year’s
faces are, year after year
how we will seem then
and how we are, thirty
years ahead I saw or so
and stopped seeing only when
there’ll be no more me to see.

12 July 2007
1. What does that little wolf want?

Mostly eyes. Want to look.
I saw your eyes following my hands
as I talked with them the way I do,
they tell me I’m trying to carve
words out of thin air.

To be there for someone and no more dreams.
Sunblock, yes, and Camelot,
and riding in your sister’s Porsche, OK
but no more dreams.
The dry mouth of dreams. The dry lips.

Mostly wolves want to find
what they can see, run it down
and see if it tastes as
rich as it looks. What flesh
is ever up to expectations?
A lifelong friendship in a single bite.

2. And what is a pawn?

Nabokov said it is the clitoris,
the smallest person who rules all the rest.
Turns into the queen, in fact,
at the end of the day, or anything else
you want, it can become
any other man or horse or tower,
anything your dreamy heart desires.
And when you wake it is a pawn again.

The same word as peon, actually,
not the same word as paon, ‘peacock.’
Though there is an island where the peacock rules
and small tawny men labor to keep him fed.

3. How does it look?
It looks with its eyes like a wolf. It looks like a wolf; its eyes are gold and see your eyes.

When I say you I don’t mean anybody. A word is particular enough. The boy or girl comes later, picks it up or fits it in or on.

Sees what it says. It looks with its word, it looks with its tongue feeling its way through the world by making sounds.

All the unfaithful animals run away from their master’s voice, he is left alone in the pine grove babbling to fireflies still busy in the gloaming in July. By the little river. By the waterfall. By the phantom hosta ready to resurrect again.

And still nobody answers the way he sees.

4.

*Why be the one in a room who knows the name of it?*

That is the real question. Why be you when you could be anybody?

How to know everything you know without being you,

and still not know it so you can still be in the room
intimate with all these people, really with them,
be them, all skin and sing and still be solipsist.

Because knowing is a sword
and isolates. Because knowing

the name of something only makes it more so,
makes it worst, because knowing

the same of something only works
when you make love to it.

When you kiss the hollow place
from which the word was pried out,

and dare to shuffle barefoot through the gap
between the listless trees of paradise.

12 July 2007
why be the name
when you can be the thing

how to tie a knot in fire
nail water to the wall

why stand by the mirror
when you need a lens

that shoots backwards
through the calendar

where there is nothing to be seen?

12 July 2007
By the checkout in Wal-Mart
I see a poor old man with a newly missing hand

The globe of the earth is evidence enough
the crime itself has never been solved
and all the detectives are sound asleep.

13 July 2007
As if there were one left for me—
what would it be? What did you mean
to bring me home from that continent
other side of Africa? Everybody's
there now, I alone am left to man
the station of only being here,
makes me some kind of hero, more
Lancelot than Achilles, faithful
only to my needs. A dark priest,
vanishing witness to a disappearance,
but still here for a little while,
highway at my elbow. Listen,
I am able. Sunlight cold in dawn
trees, isn't that enough? To tell you
any more would disgrace us both
as if the Imagination broke in the night.
Maybe it snapped. What a way
to wake up in the world, too many W's
a letter signifying never-ending appetite,
prairie wind, moving things around
for no purpose, the idle hurricane.
World means something wrapped up
in itself, they tell me, how did I get loose,
or did I? are these very things I'm humming
just part of the primordial jive? See,
I'm telling you after all, which makes me
at best a liar or at worst a forgetful lover
who didn't hear the owl call last night
though it was cool, and who dares not believe
the crow I hear calling right now is actually
calling me. He is, though. They all are.
It is like a prayer to hear him. I feel lost
like a beggar in the ragged hem of God's cloak.

13 July 2007

It could be a case of something else
kept me from sleeping with myself
that night I mean this morning when
the absence of wind outside the house woke me with the sound of the small river across the street I wouldn’t usually hear till later. Go figure as they say on television, though why they have to say anything at all when they can actually show it beats me. As they say. I wish I could do that. Here, look at it. This is the whole of what I meant. The vernacular impediment, a man I wanted to be. Or actually was.

13 July 2007
1. But after all a broken letter
tells the truth to a broken world,
it crashes through the mail box
like a dog jumping out of a dory
while yachtsmen laugh and worry.
The way we are, scattered fish
on somebody’s abandoned shore.

2. Say her name, you’ve spent your whole
life making it up, pronounce it now,
summon her from bladderwrack
from shingle. You last saw her
vanish in this very fog. There is no
fog, only the words you keep saying.

3. Language is the opposite of being clear.
Language always says another thing.
Not this thing. This o my god so
stupid ordinary thing I need.
Don’t write it down. Give it to me.

13 July 2007
The fish peddler cries Quack Quack in the blue street
and everything seems right again because the words are wrong.
It is music, everybody can play,
it is tomorrow at last, the sleek
daughter of yesterday runs among us
and she knows more than daylight does but keeps quiet,
tacet, Latin says what we have no single verb to say.
Our words are wrong! We are free again!
No more yesterday and tomorrow is already pregnant,
this island universe is saved. The day after tomorrow
they come down from heaven to explain.

13 July 2007
Sometimes you’re all alone in the world you think then you see a picture and realize that a lot of other people are looking at it too and thinking the same things that you’re thinking. You’re still alone but you stop thinking so. It is different, everybody facing the same face or cathedral pictured in the rain or a girl laughing over her shoulder. It is different because they are them and you are you but the picture is the same. In fact every picture is the same picture. Anything you can look at and then look away is called a picture. Every one is the same, breaks the same commandment. You are alone, a sinner, not even knowing how to stop sinning, stop seeing. Once you have seen something, even blindness is no refuge, as Oedipus learned. When you can’t see anything any more, you see all the more what you had already seen. You look at the picture, all innocent again, happy that alone as you are you are not alone when you are looking at it. Everyone is looking at it too. She smiles over her shoulder and the picture ends. Everyone has been deceived, and is glad about it. That is what pictures are for, and why the Jews were told to abstain from inspecting them. Once seen, seen forever. Every image is an idol. Worship me.

13 July 2007
life is lifting
dead words away
to find the living speaker

13 VII 07