3-2006

marA2006

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Recommended Citation
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Chaining go the chances
somber medicos align
aghast at life’s sweet spate
‘make light of it’ the joke
it is requires explanation,
but joke it is, dear heart.
The laughter later.

1 March 2006
HEAVEN

As ever when you wake up from a dream, relief. And a little wistfulness.

1 March 2006
Thor-wards a gang of girls
mind on dissuading
that grumpy mesomorph—

how can a little boy
get so resentful
and go on feeling it
long after the battlefield is quiet
and the crows have fed,

years and years and never
with all his cutting
does the wound ever work,
they die and he feels no better.

They hope he listens as they explain.
Unlikely. Beauty
is one more thing for him
to feel bad about.

So keep your generals out of the museum,
keep Edward Teller away from the Steinway—
beauty is the food of their revenge.

1 March 2006
The fool thinks: I have thrown
the stone of my love into the ocean
to be rid of it forever. Maybe
I should go to sea and find it
to learn if it is really wet.

1 March 2006
I am smarter than I think
dumber than I look.
Or you look, or you think.

Or there is no one here,
just looking and thinking.
Just looking.

1 March 2006
1.
The breath hasn’t gotten ready yet
to be long. I have to be wrong
a little first a little while.

2.
Midday mating. Meet your shadow
and become one with her.
You lunch together then drift apart.

3.
I have made up these instructions
and followed them all my life,
still don’t know if this is how the machine
is supposed to work or what it does
with all the days it makes.
Is it a memory-maker only? But how it hums!

4.
The welcome light above the blue-tiled gate
admits two strangers.
And just when you think it’s nightfall
you have to stand up and name them.

1 March 2006
1.
How be so sure a man wrote that?
Eloquent ugliness longs to that half-species
or idle in idiolect, ixnay on ovlay –
I want the gates of Golgonooza, I yearn to lick
their entrances, jasper doorsills, thrones of musk.
Ixnay on the uskmay, it sold out long ago,
busloads of them hurried to Juarez
in search of the Pre-Columbian Experience
on sale down there in heat in shadow and in hurt—
you’ll never know the thing before you know.
2.

There are pictures of you doing it.
The first snowflake of the catastrophe
floats pretty by the window in the dining roon,
no two alike they say, but this one particular
is not even like itself, competes with its trace
on my memory, my apprehension of the fall to come.
Dining room has such civility, bank account,
shampoo. It’s all right now. The years
of awkwardness are over and the prints
mounted on the wall, hang down
from what they used to call the picture rail,
tremble a little in the elusive draft.
Turn the page, we’re done with language
and all its cats for every room and all its rooms
for every house and all its acreage to hold
not much when it comes down to it, just
an old picture of you doing it.
3.

They used to write books about the adventures of a coin from hand to hand, ridiculous.
How many transactions this quarter had,
how many lives it interviewed and left,
each time giving nothing and taking nothing.
Of course we want to follow it deep down
in somebody’s snug jeans, or fallen on the church floor
when the old ones light their votive candles or
rolling down the subway steps. See one coin
see them all. We know their places,
traces, Byzantine escapades, travels, exiles,
deft predictions, taste of dark chocolate,
ridiculous exceptions to an absent rule.
4.

Hold a mark a minute. Once
it meant a bread and butter.
Now stick it on your chimneypiece
alongside the African ibex in ebony
and the miniature fez from Fez.
You’ve been places too, lived
in other people’s pockets, close,
close, felt their hands all over you,
slipped away in darkness and disgrace.
Nobody’s different – you learned that
in middle school, how every night
the Same comes through the neighborhood
on average feet and slays the differences.
Wake now and give me all your memories,
mine I lost in Massapequa on a blind date.

2 March 2006
THULE, 2

But wonder comes after lighting, 
means desire is quicker than perceiving –
we’re always stumbling after, can never 
get there because by definition 
it’s the next thing that’s needed 
not this against which you rest now 
a moment or two exhausted, 
calmed for a moment by its cool surface. 
He suspected life is an archipelago 
of trivial experiences leading north 
to Thule, the serene warehouse 
of what we want before we want it.

2 March 2006
MENISCUS

means little moon, a man word,
a physics. Resist us
when we try to use you,
word.

Be one of those
hard to have to dinner,
ever know where to seat you,
hard attractive words
everybody knows nobody uses
eudaimonism serendipity aporia.

2 March 2006
Why are so many
love poems really
written to the dictionary?
I want to suck
your etymology.

2 III 06
AFTER IT’S OVER YOU’RE ALLOWED TO SAY ITS NAME

Barrel-vaulted ceiling and a sparro
caught in on a draught. Window winter.
See the bird flutter not too worried,
birds are such philosophers,
whatever comes in has to come out,
back and forth and sideways through big room.
Pompeii was like this, and Persepolis,
lost places hidden even from the air
until a bird looked in, a goat fell,
a caravan came by and started guessing.
Camels. History is such shit.
Everything comes out. Later we say
That was Byzantium or the War
Between the States, that was October
Revolution. The bird is not impressed.
The vault is spacious, almost endless,
warm enough at times and full
of chances, the wise stuff it calls seed.
Now tell me where I have gone and been
and come back slow on aching knees
after so long and never left home.

2 March 2006
Everything used to work out right for us and then it didn’t.

Silver shadows in the airport, you lifted your dress briefly to show a bruise.

Coffee not too bad, a shared banana muffin. Beastly time erasing opportunity.

The rented van smelled cool, the Everglades seemed innocent, all week we never saw a snake, let alone an alligator.

By week’s end the bruise was fading, we never discussed how you came by it, it was just more history and we had too much of that already.

Nice to be down there where history happened if at all in other languages and not lately, and to people not enough like us for us to care. Then we too had to be not there. 2 March 2006
-- I hate it when X runs the readings –
    she only brings her boyfriends or
    men she wishes were.

-- What’s wrong with that? The only good
    thing about poetry is that it comes
    from people – straight from people
    with no lies along the way.

-- But words are all lies.

-- Exactly – they only can become true
    when you say them, say a lot of them,
    so each one rebukes the other
    and it’s your own poor breath
    put to work to make them march
    forward over the deserts of nothing going on at all.

2 March 2006
DIFFICULTIES IN DISCUSSING THE LAW

The astonishment of the beaver
is not greater than the astonishment of light
my Talmud,

I began, no one knows better the law,
the Dharma,

whose identity I was positing
when the train went by, the old
excursion job with open sides
I knew the names of the three trains on that line
knew them and recited them
when our minds went to the train but now I remember
only “The Niagara,” traveled them all when I was a kid,
forgot the other two, my mind
and all our minds went with the train,
old summer train, down to its bridge beside the Hudson
where the ferry used to take off
then and not now,

nothing now, just as I was lecturing
to this huge room, and girls on the far side
were opening and closing sliding doors noisily,
and my point, they were trying to escape
just as I was getting to my point,
which was that just as the Jews were an irritant
in the heyday and decline of the Roman Empire
with their precious Law above and previous to
any mere emperor or legislation
so also Buddhism in our own day
can irritate and destabilize and console
because of its unerring Dharma,
primordial, a law identical
with the fact of things,
    the fact of the world,
and Dharma is the law
but by then the audience and I were
safe in our green elsewheres
remembering this and forgetting that
and riding on the significant colors
as if they turned out to be the name of a name,
laughing and shouting, the train
that has no need of windows, no need of doors.

3 March 2006
HYPONOLOGIES

1.
Meek telling.
Organ grinder.
Spelunker.

These. As well
an ancient engineer
with slide rule still

walked down the dream.
It was a one
never came on

it was a pale
economic indicator
like an Africa

or a blue flower
one time immensely
popular see them
everywhere and wake.

3 March 2006
HYPNOLOGIES

Notice:

According to the rules of polite society
you’re allowed to make up dreams
only when you’re sleeping.

3 March 2006
‘S a good
new year
something happened
something broke
the dog barked
the thieves ran away.
Change pursues us
thoughtlessly.

3 March 2006