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It is difficult when things
don’t follow other things but only themselves.
This difficulty is called a circle.

There are other difficulties—
the spoon in your hand,
women kissing the fallen at the bottom of the spine

or the anxiety that comes from not even knowing
where the bottom of something is
or how far you go down.

From such difficulties and many more
we have woven our religions,
plaiting strands of sound together till they felt

like some thing and meant something
or (even if at times) meant something else.
Words set us many a problem

and we take our revenge by thinking.
Which is a place to which they can scarcely come.
As if (for example) the Torah.

As if the Torah were an old enameled door
set into an older tile doorway
of a house we have not yet altogether entered—

left our luggage outside still.
We poke our noses in,
leave out little dog tied to an apple tree,
look around but do not live here yet,
in this house of which the Words were the door
but not the walls. In all our lives

we have barely caught a glimpse of the walls.

14 October 2006
I have to write a letter to the mice in the walls
have to persuade them to behave in a different way
from other mice, but where will I send it or leave it
so they'll find it and read? And what alphabet
do they use these days, they who have been with us
so long, even before the Greeks and long before the rats,
harmless enough but annoying, like a neighbor's music
unneighborly late, or junk mail filling the mail box,
or mildew suddenly triumphant in the garage.

They know I won't hurt them – that's the problem.
And they have no fear of litigation, not much to lose,
and the shrill voices of attorneys sound like their own kind.

So I gave to persuade them to leave my papers alone,
books, boxes of cookies, interesting labels
of leaky jars of preserves from Macedonia,

hardly anything a mouse leaves alone. But somehow
I have to find a road to them in language,
appeal to their ancient nimble consciences

and explaining how the Bible is vaguely against them
or at least what they do with their teeth,
and people keep large furry predators in their houses

just to menace or even liquidate the mice. Not me.
I'm on their side somehow. How did I get there?
Have I been reading letters from them in my sleep?

14 October 2006
Those monks
who say too much
in so few words!

Give me the old palavers,
ten thousand words to say no more
than here I am beside you

and the night is cold.

15 October 2006
Poem: a few words

to inscribe beneath a snapshot
(black and whitish, the words signed
in very white ink, famous people
always seemed to have white ink to hand
in the Old Days,
saying something smart in French.
Maybe tender. No accent marks.
Lovers do not need machinery.
But the photo vanished long ago.

15 October 2006
GAME

How many mean remarks can you generate on the model of Stravinsky's “Verdi is the Puccini of music” keeping to the $X$ is the $Y$ of $Z$ pattern?

We call this game “Stravinsky.”

16 X 06
Taste of chocolate in a sleeper's mouth,
Moving the ordinary
till what I see sees me.

16 October 2006
(ars poetica)
The chimp and Laika the Sputnik dog,  
maybe they are still alive up there,

suffered a sky change,  
need no food. Like Roman emperors

turning into specks of light.  
New gods.

16 October 2006  
(dreamt as such)
Cardinals, those hingemen of the pope,
slinking scarlet through Roman rain –
a picture never yet Caravaggio.
But who was the miracle on the bridge? Pale dress white and red. Perfectly ordinary middle-class agony like 1930s movies about torments of decent people caught in desire and deceiving. Turning away from love in noble abnegation, choosing lifelong unfulfilment. One day you will pronounce her name.

17 October 2006
And taught us what?  
There are some hills
you will never climb.

They define your horizon
which by definition
is the limit beyond

which there is no you.
Even if somebody once
for one day only

brought you there
they too would turn
suddenly invisible,

just dirt beneath your feet.

17 October 2006
Tell me the stairs again
so that I know
the genders of arrival

wine glass
smashed on the bride’s step
red thought leaks down

the way to climb,
every ruin is a sign
something you waited for all night

counted the hoofbeats
the space of breath between
the sincere snores of your companion

as the bed drifted on and on
towards these irrevocable mornings
that men have,

the cloud over
maple tree
the face in the window.

10 October 2006
“Christ goes down to harrow hell.”
Makes it hot for them down there,
the priest laughed, to wake them up,
so all who woke up from hell’s torpor
(hell is torpor) could simply walk out
through the gates with him. Come to.
Not anywhere special but just come to
the way a boxer does after a knockout.
Those three days harrowing hell
were Buddha’s fifty years of teaching.

Fire Sermon. Listen.
Get out of hell.
Get out of the mirror.
Thorn brake. Not that way.
Your syntax spills here,
your drinking horn is dry.

Run, run away from
the color of your hair.

Run while the eyes
of the circle are closed

except for one red deer
watching from the woods.
They’re always watching.
And they run too.

18 October 2006
I wish some of this would start to answer me.
Not the human predicament but this
wet and golden autumn morning after rain
and before the sun and before the war
and I’m the only one around who’s thinking
he’s awake but might be tragically wrong.
Answer me. Wake anybody who claims
to be awake. I am addressing the baroque
music of the passions, passing cars,
expressive, authentic and monotonous.
Everything that lives is on its way to work.
And still no answer. No wonder I keep talking.

18 October 2006
ARIA FOR ELIZABETH BRYANT

Cavatina:

Subtle appointment
we are locked
higher than a word

earth was read:
we are all one
by a glance

There’s always a sense
that the sky
on this seat
said things to them.

Things.

About how
we set out
several times
higher than almost.

Cabaletta:

Wherever you are
we are,
and there
turns out to be here

where you see the rocks
prows towards the town
sail, we have stood
in the same place
in snow and sun

and were different.
The colors
really do matter.
Especially that shade
of autumn rose or mauve
called ‘a child
asking questions.’

We are stained with it still.

18 October 2006
Summa means all of it. All I have to say
is the body of me saying it.
My saying is not my opinions.
Saying is what is on the other side of my opinions,
a blue woman naked in the woods.

Opinions are shit. Mine especially.
Maybe like shit they will come to fertilize
some dry crappy piece of ground.

In me. Always in me. Who is me?
The Answering Animal,
that is who I am.

This body you see around me
is the question.
You can guess all the rest but I keep on saying it.

18 October 2006