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muß ein lieber Vater wohnen

but the second
time he says it, it sounds dreamy
a little less convinced, almost
doubting, almost beginning to think –

then Schiller’s soberdrunken certainties
dissolve, and Beethoven in their pause
doubts, desires, decides–
and drowns all doubts in thunder.

7 May 2005
ENTHYMOLOGY

to know what is buried in the heart
between one perception and the next

between two thoughts the dark
place that defines the difference

the clean desire rousing to be said.
Met. What is in there? Who is speaking?

What do you want now? Say it.
Who wants it, now tell me that,

who does this wanting in you,
is it you? Or is it an other?

And do other others want it too?

7 May 2005
Caught by my own thought
I stood by the tree.
Leaves came out and said it all again.

Becoming. Baldur’s dream.
And then I forgot what I was thinking
and just thought. Till I was nowhere

and the leaves too had forgotten their lesson.

7 May 2005
Wind. The edges of the sky touch us. The ends come upon the middle.

As if sleep were a far country
I come home to day.
But things have changed
since I was here before,

the wind sounds different,
I look and see a lot of leaves,
they’re moving, it must be
the leaves that sound that way,

were there trees before I slept?

8 May 2005
Small effects from giant causes
like a printing press
stamping out a million copies
of a children’s prayer:

Dear God let it all be
the way it seems to be,
don’t let everything I learn
turn out to be a lie.

When you get down to it,
the only science is epistemology.

8 May 2005
FUNDAMENTALISM

The girls turn to flowers in my hands.

The flowers wilt,
the afternoon starts counting up the nights.

How many books
will survive the rising
waters of the Jordan,

the name means *it runs down*
and takes our meanings with it to a Dead Sea.

8 May 2005
VAISAKHA

Find us waiting
to be holy
to be more than this
however beautiful this is

to leap over my shadow—
jumping is the best advice
every second spent midair
entitles you to paradise

that park with no trees
and all the leaves are made of air
and all the greenery is gold—
some people wear their nervous system

an inch or so north of their flesh
so it is permanently over, adrift
in the lyrical prose called Truth
from which we draw our own inferences

from the leap of their legs, the smile when they come down.

9 May 2005
ESCAPIST ODE

Does it surprise you more
I am not who I seem
or that I am? A thin line
separates Cagliostro in his gypsy wagon
hurrying north to foment revolution

from me sitting here wishing I had a cigarette.
Same sun, and kindred grasses.
People get tired of their worn-out loyalties
foolish kings and merry princesses
so they slaughter that bunch and summon in
a crowd of out-of-town lawyers
to impersonate the sons of liberty.

Good ideas lead only to the guillotine.

There is sense to be made here,
a glorious freedom to be let out of its cage.
Every government is jail. Every state
is a disaster. The real star shows through
sometimes. Marie Antoinette’s pretty neck
is worth more than les droits de l’homme.

Do not kill. Cherish the cute and the particular,
the small and the ridiculous, the weird
and the banal, cherish the other side of anything,
King Farouk dressed like Babar but with a
noble fez on his empty head. Folly is precious.
Make things hard for people to want to
tell you what to do. Be the wise fellaheen of the heart.

No revolutions. Just aimless rebellion,
revelry, ribald reveille, wake up. Just smile
and do whatever you like to do.
Do that. Get the soldiers staggering drunk.
Just smile. Just laugh at them. Just say no.

9 May 2005
Walking as far as there anyway
buttress shadow moonlight around basilica
who am I to hold up a wall

I am Joseph out of the south, *arrhythmia*
the unshaping one, the Dissolver.

We swing the molecules out of God’s orbit
and set them free.

    Childbirth of trance,

shaman licks a stone wall
until it speaks,

    weeps, opens, lets

water spill. The Child follows,

    the body

is the only accurate theology.

Nobody made it. It grew
from Common Knowledge. Look
at all these buildings
in the shabby town:

    that’s who we are,

the glory of the only.

    In great eras of architecture

builders *respond*.

    Nowadays they ask questions

but there’s no body politic to answer.

Sorrow of stainless rooftops. I am Joseph,
I tried to touch.

    I carried
a dissident child
across the borders of the mind.
And sailed to a little island
on the edge of the great mistake.
Now it is dawn and my tree is sore

from holding up the sky.
But I do it for you.

10 May 2005
End of NB 276
I’ve had a lot to answer for and nobody asking.
The heavyweight ego behind the abstract words behind the seeming arbitrary one-night-stands of unrelated words – it reeks through all we say. Those who make statements are humbler than those who hide behind machinery dreaming of fame. What house has fame built now? What a pain in the neck, just below the right ear where Gulliver is waiting to be fed.

Give me two words to rub together and I’ll rule the world

or I will sit in the corner all afternoon dreamy with the smell of myself – make the words come in your ear.

Proust’s destiny. Leiris. The kindly older sister language is, already sleeping around with all the town and starting to show you the way to, you, even you.

11 May 2005
Longevity a factor of cool mornings 
after hot nights. A fertile plain 
disguised as an island. Dependable 
distances. But what if Fomenko 
was right not about time but about space 
and everything is closer together 
by far than we suppose, and only time 
terposes to illude us in polyglot 
otherness. Pretend you’re already there. 
I am the Bible, you are the Havamal. 
Together we Upanishad. As Olson said, 
that luminous Kor‘an. Massachusetts. 
An angry god leaves his shadow, 
you see it in the women’s faces 
at the Science Museum, women studying 
and teaching their children to study 
the whole cosmos of physical entitlements. 
They all show disappointment. But I, 
now that the lilacs of Clermont have 
finally blossomed again, and my own 
by the yew tree in the dooryard 
blossomed again, I know the distant valley 
is right here in my hand. Summer lakes 
and iron gates, a swan on every 
piece of water equably settled down.

12 May 2005
I have seen the mountain come to me,
I twirled her around with my fingertip,

they call this kind of flower ‘thimble’ and this kind
they will not call a rose though it is red and fragrant
no matter where you carry it.

People plant things
and other people look at them–
there is some system here
I need to read.

Hosta, columbine, morning glory –
letters in an alphabet
or squares on a game board.

The eye falls on them
and the mind changes.
How does it happen?
What is the ranunculus talking about now?

12 May 2005
Let me through –
I have a message
from the Emperor to himself.

Play ouija board with me
tonight, my queen,
and I’ll tell you what he meant.

He stares across the frozen river
wishing every human heart could freeze
and no one feel at all

until an anxious springtime
even his soothsayers cannot imagine.
Soothe-sayers, he snarls:

prophecies to put me to sleep.
Now will you play
with me tonight,

one hand on the planchette,
one hand
in the other hand’s lap?

12 May 2005
A word
a hurt
a hurry.

Hurdle. Over it
hurtling. Say
what you mean and
men recur.
Fly over. See
the victims
scurry.

These words forget me.
Interlude.
A play with four virgins
dining on the grass
green wine and strawberries

how pale my profile is
I gave you all my blood.
My meaning
was all my wanting
you drank the sap
espoused me empty
landscape as by Nethelanders
eating the field open
past trees, sun
past sun, another one
always othering.

Far me away.

12 May 2005
A FAREWELL TO HOURS

This is a composition for the *tromba marina* or nun’s trumpet – women were not allowed to play blown instruments – this great harp-sized frame holds taut a single thick string – made a sound loud enough to be heard at sea – from shore to ship

or vessel to vessel – a woman performs on it – slowing drawing the bow at different loudnesses – pressures – this is simultaneously spending time – sending time away – and saying good-bye to it as it goes.

12 May 2005
Language makes it so

There is nothing known but language makes it so.

Language makes it so what.

Deep in the amplexus of one woman
cry out another woman’s name
and see the force of language with your skin.

13 May 2005


Die tote Stadt

In the opera the city is dead.
In the city the opera is dead.
Korngold moves to Hollywood.
No opera, no city.
Errol Flynn swings through the air.
Now they’re all dead
and I’m the final opera.
Listen to me sing
through that woman’s throat

over there, the one you think is singing.

13 May 2005
Cold bright morning. Cat prowls where cat ought not. Hmm. Things for me to do something about. A friend’s friend hurt his back. Heal him, heal her. From all the pain this body knows a song goes up. Call it prayer. The cat hears it and goes away. My wife on the same day hurt her back a little, sacroiliac, I pray for her, all the pain this body knows is all I know, turn it into something. New. Prayer. Don’t worry about to whom. Just pray. Doesn’t matter if no one’s there. Pray. You’re here. That’s the point, my body says.

13 May 2005
I’ve been talking all week
a dozen hours a day
but as if it isn’t or wasn’t
language I said. Or say.

And what is this in my hand now
my mouth is trying to pronounce?

***

Enough language to launch a small planet
on its way around a dying star.

Maybe we give something to the Sun.
Maybe Earth is a kind of answer too.

13 May 2005
I keep trying to figure this out—
*La morbidezza*, anthem
of this Escapist Movement,
waffling goliards discussing exceptions
plausibly lengthy footnotes trailing
clouds of obfuscations which
turn out to be a kind of glory after all

wouldn’t you, you sufi sonnet
simpering with octaves, all talk
and no sextet?

14 May 2005
And another thing,
aren’t you the cloud
that brings the bird
that brings the snow
that melts the sun
into a pale soup
of messages on high
you need a better
Cassandra (Kaxandra) than I
to read, she said
and I thanked her deeply
for her cleavage,
the courtesy of her substance
for what else have we
to give but what we are?

14 May 2005
Other things try to change me 
but I know. What do I know.

The fierce winter silence of New Jersey 
meadows even, tropical nights 
under sick grey fences in the Old Mill 
district, City Line oblast, 
in the Government of Brooklyn 
a billion years ago when I was 

whatever it occurs to me to declare, 
a daily communicant much vexed 
with Hellenistic engorgements 
and every sort of excess a twelve 
year old could enterprise 

if I may use such a word. You can 
if anybody can. The bats 
were frequent in the ginkgo trees, 
the rabbis loud in their ceremonies 
but the priests kind of slapdash 
at their transubstantiations, 

ah those were the days, when magic 
was everywhere and every woman 
a witch and every wound 
healed instantly in that pure 
eternity called Never. I still hurt
from all of them, never mind the names,
you know who you are, I bless
the momentum of our collision,

soil of such dandelions. Eye
of the dragon. Pectorals of the wolf.

14 May 2005
Herb robert growing
suddenly by my porch

goosefoot, celandine and such,
the little yellow miracles
that come when the mosquitoes wake,

pestilence is part of the ecology
West Nile now and yellow fever then
two hundred years ago coasts of Manhattan—
the back houses on Cornelia
rushed them up to house the families
fleeing from the river meadow plague


I want to dream a better Byzantium
with golder gold and statelier admirals
and every book bejeweled as the Koran
and every veil whisks off
slyly in the penumbra of the afternoon,
the blue hour when the goddess takes
the face and form of every girl or boy
and molds them to her own.

I’ll start my work with this linden leaf,
a heart as big as yours or more so,
here, I bring it to you, the scraggly
cat meanwhile chasing blackbirds.

14 May 2005