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DOUBT NEVER SLEEPS

A day when you number everything
a lilac day a hood ornament
on an extinct kind of car, proud swan,
they tell you a motor is what drives
a machine, a machine does work,
if it doesn't it's just a thing. A device
can be anything. All my life I have been
clearer than you have and where
has that gotten me, all alone with apes
on the islands of precision, too many
coconuts, waiting for spring, you though
don't like to hear me in this kind of mood,
words are just things we say, soft
attenuations of our non-stop breath,
islands not continents, hotels not homes.
Soft stones. A word is just what comes
out my mouth and bothers you, a word
is what we do to the air. How could it be
wrong? Or right? Parmenides slept again
dreaming of a wall of books intersecting
another wall with other books and his house

fell from the weight of them, crumbling
inward into its foundation. Birds outside
not too frightened hurried skyward
through the arising dust. White birds,
strange to see them so far from the sea.

15 May 2005

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Hold my horses –
a habit is forming
around the edges of the soufflé pan
di nostra vita where we simmer
in so beautiful an oven
o dear God the sky is blue tile

Just like Samarkand
where you cheated on your lover with your wife.

2.
Ornate mysteries, sudden Sufi.
The wife you always belong to.
Now and then I have a taste for morals
but ethics is the art of being dull
about the only really interesting thing
of all: how you and I (to pick two
people at random) do it to each other.

3.
At times I think I have something to say
about such matters. Other times
I just want to sleep beside you
dreaming of a perfectly white sky.

16 May 2005

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Too many noise.

A pigeon talks with his
feet actually.

Then the mowers come
like a new kind of weather.

Everything comes down.

17 V 05

=====

I am in Venice again
walking with you in the shady streets
far from the canal, the city
of strangers and mosaics
is far behind us. This street
is like a street. A cat.
A shadow. A dinky tree.

Memory is like a god isn't she,
whimful, always pouncing
on this tender moment and
making it that one instead.

A rage of sensuous details –
how to be two places at once
when we aren't really here
in the first place.

Goddess
of elsewhere, of sudden arisings,
queen of absolute and homesick and
why is a remembered place so sad?

17 May 2005

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What good is a calendar celebrating the dead?
We need to know who's alive right now, the Saints,
able to help us or at least kiss us and make us feel
if not feel better. I want the address of the living,

the dead have their own agenda, their own
mysterious politics, Bakunin, Emma Goldman,
Mother Teresa, who knows what they're up to.
I want the mistakes of the living, the hot confusions

of flesh like my own, of skin that likes skin.
I want the hands of the Saints in my hands,
I want opal rings and summer houses and blue rain,
I want them to make mild pathways in the woods

that will take me there clearly, past Heidegger's
cottage and the studious bad wolf, past wells
full of glamorous naiads, past used car lots,
past post offices overflowing with letters,

all of them written urgently to me.

18 May 2005

NATURAL GRAMMAR

Being close enough to tell one from another.

Self from Not-self
but what could that *be*?

There is no punctuation in the world.
No pause, flex, turn, bend.
No bio-comma,
no end.

 We have to revise human grammar
out of our minds
 before we begin to
pronounce the word 'ecology.'

Or else, far from that, we have to
ponder Natural Grammar so deeply that

we understand it as a map of all every process,
our process too.
What is natural grammar?

Grammar is the unconscious.

Does each language (Wolof, Telugu, Catalan) have its own
unconscious?

Or is each language (Basque, Finnish, Welsh) only the nonce dream
of the one unconscious, the single dream that powers human
utterance? Each language no more 'permanent' than any ordinary
dream's imagery and narrative sequence might be.

Language as a nonce phenomenon of mind?

No. Language *is* the unconscious.

Ecology is the unconscious.

On different planes, the unconscious rules.

By different rules.

Locate the symmetries inside the seem.

Everything alive is asking: What do I do next? Then doing it.

Language is as good a way of speaking as any other.

Language presumably makes parrots molt and glaciers roll or melt.

We live surrounded by clues to a crime that has not yet been committed.

But we are constantly distracted by all the evidence of crimes from which we have barely recovered. Survived.

Survival is evidence enough.

Natural grammar. If it exists, it would be the grail of all our pondering and half-waking dreams, the hypnopompic liberator, the machine that runs us.

If it does not exist, we have to invent it,

because without natural grammar's supple endancement of its ruby gestures, we'll never fit into this peculiar edifice,

the life thing, the being.

Or get out.

So we (who are natural) must invent natural grammar, where invent means both discover and create.

As for the past several hundred years, we have been inventing nature.

(Think of the points in that invention: Bruno's *Spaccio*, Milton's *Comus*, Erasmus Darwin's *The Botanic Garden*, the Bartrams, Thoreau, Emerson, Muir, Raffinesque...)

*

Answer the phone.

It's about time.

*

The appalling silence of language when we embarrass it with questions for which it has all too many answers.

*

If I knew how I learned to speak, I would know almost everything.

*

Children know where they were before they were born, who they were and what they did.

This knowledge is erased by education, though traces linger in dreams, vivid flashes in exhaustion, and in what critics fondly call 'imagery' in poems and paintings – the *things* we see that for an instant renew knowledge of that previous situation.

The lives of which I am composed.

*

Poetry is a kind of cure for ignorance. It casts its nets for such images as re-mind us, restore the linkage with our previous minds, reawaken the continuity of awareness.

I have seen this moon before, and it talked to me.

This lilac at my house door.

*

Poetry, far from being “untranslatable” as lazy minds so lazily aver, is really the only discourse that can be translated –

its spell cast in another language,

a tree whose shadow falls on every speech.

The tree is rooted far away, its fruit falls here.

We shelter in the shade of a tree cut down long ago in another country.

Only the shadow lasts.

In any language.

18 May 2005

CLUACINA

Not waiting before speaking.

People always try to listen to a circle; they
should try to listen to a straight line.

Geometry is out mother

it says so, plain as Whitman,
things possessing shapes
are inside other shape-possessing things—

isn't that enough to be about,
for a science, or for a brick wall
lining the public sewer sacred
to the Goddess of Exceptions,
Lady of Deletions, Cluacina,
goddess of fallout and forget.

I build your narrow endless house
of brick, itself a kind of glory mud
lasts as long as human weather.

Sacred. Sacer. To be outside
the commonplace. To be off the common.

But there is no name recorded
for the Goddess of the Ordinary—

 I would call her by my name
 to enroll me at last in the regular
if I were a woman or divine
or if I had a name of my own.

19 May 2005

=====

Things happen and revise me.

Car doors slam. Soft hum
of tires rolling off. I am not
who I was before this sound

that seemed at the time to have
nothing to do with me. Over the fence,
other people coming and going,
busy as we are, different, same,

a visitor drives away in his or her car
in the heart of a bright morning
and changes my life forever
a little bit maybe but for good.

Who am I that *am* is so rubbery?

Insouciant mystery of time
that I forget my conversion
son as it happens,

am changed
even in the heart of change.

19 May 2005

=====

Something left to record?

Bid flight, owl pellet,
birch bark. Analyze.

The things that are easy to say
say us all the time.

19 May 2005

ADDICTION

Spansule evidence
dissolves slow by slow
through the arena of your consciousness,

what we think we know.
Drug of fact. A bull dying in the sun.

19 May 2005

SPASM

Unlovely word
for that to which
the natural
aspires

as to its god.
And then another
just as good
or better.

And then the last.
You only really
know it's yours
when you can break it.

19 May 2005

HASTENING THE END

If language had said it all
already there would be no
necessity of speaking. Yet
we feel, each of us, even
the surliest or wisest feels
at some point the curious
neurophysiological event
(itself much in need
of research and reflection)
called “the need to speak.”

People say there are ‘bursting’
from the need to talk,
to spit it out, burst from
the mounting pressure of
what must be said.

Therefore
we must speak, there must be
something language hasn’t
even yet ever said, and we
have to say it. And must use

language to express what language
never said. Maybe a day
will come when it all
will have been said, then
language can sleep and we can wake.

19 May 2005

=====

Endish, a moose like,
standing looking in a lake,

let it be his lake, he
surveying what environs him,

it is a matter to find
the end of the matter,

the small heart far away
that prompts the beast.

*

System falter. Sometimes close
to the web itself you hear
the thrum of its decisions
undecided deciding all things,

the hum of what happens,
close enough to think you could
reach out and touch the strands,
could influence the machine.

The moose snorts, splashes
loud of the lake.

20 May 2005

«LES LILAS»

So many spirits
cats under lilac listen
by the turn in La Moussière
tall fence and bushes

sun on the other side of the street
among the dusty clematis,
their Turkish eyes, their purple
skirts quivering in evening wind.

20 May 2005

AUDEMUS DICERE

Because the bread is on the table
because the table too is made of wood
because the floor

because the barbarians
have come and gone and come again and stayed
and their blood is our blood
and their feathers are our fur
their tents our shadows
we dare to speak

we dare to use language
because there is a lick of rain along the leaf
because shadow always knows its place
until it rises one last time to kiss us in the night

and there are words
to answer it
to evade the insinuations of the light
and just be here
with breadcrumbs on our lips

children with the cup held in both hands
but the cup is water
the cup is the skin of their hands

we dare to speak.

20 May 2005