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Can there be words for the difference?
An edge between a flower
say, or hurt hunting skin.
Where does it hammer to happen?

How does Thor’s emblem come
to hang round Christian necks?

Labrys to Hammer to Cross,
a manless cross in the sky—

He’s always gone on the symbol
“our faith is in the Resurrection,
look! the empty cross!”—
imagine her saying that.

My blood pressure.
The gates of some other heaven.

The rent or the mortgage.
The pearl nestled in the socket of your throat.
I really mean it.
After every jewel a shadow

leading through human suffering
hand by hand to the center of the earth.

I love you because you are sudden and red,
because sparrows go on clustering

(round the foot of the Cross) in snow to catch
the bird seed falling from the feeder

where big birds perch, the agitation of food.
All eating is a sin,

it all takes life, no matter how vegan,
rice weevils die that we may live,

untold massacres of organic harvest
and we’re not even ashamed as we chew

the way we might be when we eat a little lamb.
Adjust the lens of justice!

See everything differently,
our only chance is coffee on the terrace
watching skiers sail off into vacancy
through the pixel wonderland of falling snow.

I wake up every morning and open the curtain
reading the new light like a letter from the Pope,

the immense authority of the day.
Blood singing through my ears,

the weird hymns the body knows
and will never tell the mind,

why should it? the mind is a stranger
in this soft hotel and soon will be gone.

10 December 2005
Glib – I wrote the word
then wondered – ice
to slip on, a word
to betray what I’m really
thinking – a pause
in the wrong place,
a yellow rose.

10 December 2005
After all the certainty
a slick little doubt
to ease the passage –
an angel with its
paws on your heart.

10 XII 05
So many times of us. Kinds.
A pennant slung from an oak tree
as if every living thing
had a politics, and only I escaped.
Waveless sea, you are my mother.

In dreams I come close to waking
inward, waking in the doorway
on the other side of sleep’s house,
walking out bravely
into that morning

that no one living has ever seen.

10 December 2005
And there’s more,
always more:
the slim repeating
we call ‘song’—
who first presumed
a tune?

10 December 2005
THE WAY

1.

The shapes of people
keep telling more and more.

The way. That is what is to be seen:
each one, each one’s way,

the way of them.
What they tell me

and what I know.

2.

The different agonies of what passes,
the peculiar little pleasures,
what is touched
as it passes by.

But what is there, that place
into which each of them disappears,
the vortex of being so far away from me?
The flower of confusion
blossoms in the candid afternoon,
no penalty, all wound and no pain,

I learned it from my father:
we are made partly out of sky
and are most at home when we stare into the distance

10 December 2005
Red Hook
PLAIN NAMES

What do they mean
all the books on all my shelves?
They are my names.
My genesis. The read
and the unread alike
declare me, reveal me,
like any name
conceal me.

But what was my plain name
before I read a word,
and what would that be like,
a plain name,
a name before language?

*

But language is the breath of the other,
the smell of her mouth,
a name before language
would be a name before you

wouldn’t it? Or do you too
have a plain name of your own?

11 December 2005
PRAYING BY ROTE

But it is the ‘body’
that needs to pray –

the body, that complex
of inherited and acquired
habit patterns –

the Mind is pure.
Or: the Mind is always praying.

The Mind is prayer.

When people tell you Think about the words when you pray
they may be leading you astray —

Thinking about the words can become thinking about words.

Let the body hum, let the body alone to pray.

11 December 2005
but the man, this W, wants,
he wants
to be the Master of the End of Time,
he doesn’t care what happens to the earth
or to the ordinary children of men and women
because he was never an ordinary child
and he knows the earth his father bought him
with his father’s money
will last as long as money does,

and when money is gone
then god can come and take away the rest.
No worry, no eco, no Kyoto conscience.
He wants, and the only thing he hasn’t got
yet is the end of the world,
he wants to be President when the clouds come in
and the moon rolls up like an old scroll
and the devil carries off his own.

11 December 2005
Then nothing is more than the cloth you wrap around it
and the floorwalker’s carnation smells of frangipani strangely
and you walk to the end of the aisle among silk neckties
thinking cathedral, cathedral when will I get to heaven.
How high the nave. And galleries or balconies around it
level after level, seventh heaven just beginning, all of them with
gilt acanthus leaves on wrought-iron balustrades my God
what can we do with money now that smells so wonderful
as John Wanamaker’s organ (many a joke about that) or
the Thirtieth Street Station’s immense Hellenic columns
o God I need the world so much, now close the hospital.

11 December 2005
I have carried midnight with me all day long, The brittle mind of it afraid to commit a thought to word. Or touch what would be absent in the morning. Weariness of now. And this clock has no hands.

11 December 2005
HEEDING

What it tells me:
I need air
(the voice I listen for
so many years

explaining
what comes next
from this seed
the whole text

breathlessly
effortlessly grows,
seed or said
something it knows

leaves me
to figure out
its restless certainty
inside the doubt)

go out and breathe.

12 December 2005
But the pretense
that I am listening
is listening.

The round Carolingian letters
I read all night
(waking to Budapest on tv
in fog the gallant bridges)

were the words – I understood
this just now – were writing
the words I am supposed to live
out all my life,

each day a translation from its dream.

_Gleichschaltung_ the Nazis said,
the whole of reality brutally
realigned every morning to shape,
the sense of things the dream has left—
if the truth were known,
there was no Portugal before last night.

Everything begins again anew.
Refine the dream and politic the air—
something slow in me this morning
as if some of me is still back there
in the Dark Age library
it seems to please me
at this moment to
imagine I remember:

on my monument they’ll say of me

*He lied about his dream until you woke.*

12 December 2005
TEMLPM

The north of the sky very dark
and I don’t use ‘very’ lightly.
The southwest has some pale,
a flirt of blue that is not there
when I look straight at it.

Not it. The taste of fresh coffee
(French roast Mocha) disturbs
a cavern in the western brain.
Or skill. There are spaces in there
no anatomist can tell. Then
in that cave a sudden surge
of heavy air shunts to the north—
it has the look outside they mean
when they say It looks like snow—
where ‘snow’ is a verb, future tense,
anomalous grammar of the sky.

12 December 2005
Or what is the matter with me?
So many pens only one penis.
Neither light nor dark can finally win.
It goes on compromising forever
until we call the compromise a principle
and pray to it and try to heal our lives.

12 December 2005
Asking the Zodiac questions it behooves the querent to listen hard. Then the animals in question (plus a man with a pot on his head, a girl cradling a sheaf of corn, and one delicate machine) ran squeak or snuffle each in their own language, undistracted by language, and the querent hears the truth of all that’s said. Isn’t it wonderful to have ears inside your head.

12 December 2005,
Kingston