12-2005

decF2005

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but as if there were horses out there on the snow
so slow they move I think all night
they are the shadows of the scattered trees
mooching up the hill as the full moon turns

a man at the window of a dark house
on a full moon night looks out and he doesn’t
know what he sees and nobody can guess
what he thinks he’s looking at

black and white world when the world
is never white and black and now it is
and all the horses that might be deer
and certainly are trees move up the hill

just slow enough so he can’t see them go
why do things torture us this way
and move and dance and never let us know
and everything whispers in my ear

I am the shadow of some other thing.

17 December 2005
stubble more on the left cheek than the right why?
handedness happens and makes itself known
and we poor Americans we live on the left side of the world
where everything is sinister and fangled new and hard
two days now falcons have crashed into my window
and what am I to think? everything is an explanation.

17 December 2005
LILIES OF THE FIELD

But when they wither
there is a turn,
nature that two-faced
lieutenant turns her back.

Horse hill. Dead cell phone.
Torn sail. A sick man,
an old man, a dead man.

And He fled through the voluptuous
embraces of the night,
came to himself in the empty dawn and became.

In my little crappy way
that was my sign too –
the vacant immensity of the sky over Brooklyn
in the bleak dawnlight after debauch
between the seasons, and the el platform
lifted me higher than Moriah
into the enlightened air
and I knew my life has a goal
and I would have to travel all my life
to reach it and it is right here
already, only have to live into it,
the goal that is the road to itself.

17 December 2005
Watch? Or catch?
Something waiting,
something being different.

Wondering is gambling—
is the seen world
as is seen, or
is there another, under
or just behind?

One way to tell
look over my shoulder and see
what is behind me.
Am I the agent of a foreign power?
Is there a city or an animal back there,
a big light behind that
and I’m just the shadow of what it sees?
Then you might be that to me.

17 December 2005
Discover the invention
that invents a new discovery
every day. Call it dawn.
Sell it to me
wrapped up in words
and I’ll unwrap it
veil by veil until it’s you.

17 December 2005
But it is another language
I found it inside the apple
what could I do but say it
it sounded like someone beautiful
speaking Danish, sounded
like a cormorant screaming
at a fisherman, sounded
like a seal asleep on the shore

what could I do but swallow
everything I heard
and turn it into numbers,
numbers and stones, stones
and scratches on the stones,
blind men know how we look
by how we sound, what could I do
but say everything I could?

17 December 2005
In twenty minutes the mistral
clears out the heavy humid soup
from the south and the valley
is crisp and cold, the stars
come back around the moon
and Christ is born

born again
here on the Rhone, ancient
city modern city Christ
is born wherever Mary travels
the wife who knows how
to give birth to her husband
again and again,

so many
languages to say that simple fact
Do not touch me woman
I am not ready yet, a day will come
when we will climb
the ladder made of light
that stretches into the ordinary sky
out of any random rock
and do it again and again
until my blood runs in
everybody’s veins
everybody’s country
and there is no wind
that does not know my name.

17 December 2005
AMONG THE LATER PLATONISTS

1.
And the theologians’ convention begins
we wear our hats
on the way to the beginning
but leave them there
scattered in the talkative wine

2.
I come home bareheaded
the way you loved me always
a candle burning in a piece of salt
I can lick the flame
and taste the sea we used to own
and set working to our own purposes,
exiles, poor children of Eve.

3.
So then Christmas comes close
again, that confusion of loneliness and love and weather,
we might as well have kept our hats
they keep the snow off our eyes
or shield the book we’re reading
from the impartial criticism of the Sun –
that terrible objectivity
that loves nobody ever again.

4.
We might as well have gone to Flanders
and fought some antique war,
we might as well have been our uncles, our aunts,
used our hands as windows, peeked
through our fingers at the king waddling by.
We might as well have slept in the trees.

5.
Is it here, is it something
we can taste? No,
it’s just one question after another
till the snow melts and slides off the roof
with a great downrushing noise
we think at first is angels. Then the Russian
philosophers desert the living room
leaving their copies of Nietzsche behind
written in some language not his and not theirs and not mine.
6.
Take this. Taste inside taste –
hold this word up to your eyes
and sight along it.
Indians moving through the trees.
The first movie you ever saw
is just about to begin.

17 December 2005
Catching cannily
at sun in the snow
I need to revise
my hesitations –
it is cold where I am, an article
of faith is like warm underwear
a woolen credo apt with itch
yet snuggles you in the world of time
among the shivering atheists
you lust for in the wall.

Knowledge was the fruit of one tree
Desire of the other. In Gnostic shade
I gobble with both hands.

He said,
and who am I to doubt
so sure a voice
especially when it rises from between my ears,
that vast Antarctic ice sheet
full of howl and wind-whipped gravel
from which it’s up to me to fashion
meek secular eternities like these.

18 December 2005
ERDA

Erda is the alto tone
or deep entitlement of
knowledge in the living bone,
you have to listen
deep in you to hear her think.

But that is she you hear
down there, country riddles
she murmurs till the world is done
and every time you listen
one more useless answer
that almost by accident saves your life—

so that is listening, which
when they sell it is called music.
Till then the bone
is flute and drum, the bone
is gamelan and lute and horn,
the bone is that strange sitting dance
they call an orchestra.

Till then the bone is you.
All that baroque trumpet glory is reminder
only, grace notes pirouetting round the sound of you.
And walk away from what we know
an acid running through a tube
that burns some lines in paper
into what seems – by radiance –
to inject itself in us –
parry the blow, the ordinary
is all there is

until you blink
like a crow twitching its tail feathers in a tree
until you blink and everything is changed
and it changed to changes too

until the acid has inscribed the world
describing it to itself,
defiling it with beauty –
that desperate hope in the socket of the heart.

18 December 2005
But writing this
and thinking that is all I should be doing –

why the guilty feeling all my life, always
that I should be more?

18 XII 05
If there were a pyramid
whose vertices oriented
themselves towards
the five significant stars,
what would your name be then,
my darling Aleph Beth?

18 December 2005
I need the rather,
the rock.
On Garnet Mountain
I found this nugget
the rough of it
with dull and glint
red and the dark
color under red
I see best when I close my eyes.
The heavy habit
of its being. Of being.

18 December 2005
A quick Edda
for the wife of the man
in the Moon, I’m sorry
I keep bothering her
with absolutes and
midnight assertions,
she has hidden from me
too long, like Lisbon
in rain, like the Amazon
rafted by priests.
Answer this riddle
or show me your face:
what does my face look like
the first time I see yours?

18 December 2005
I still have seen it,
the broken glass
the faded flower

the old witch
who holds the flickering candle
doesn’t look so old at all now

and the water looks like a green field
and the deep well leads into the sky

Don’t I see the stars down there
around her little blue lantern?

Hasn’t it been calling me all my life?

18 December 2005
It seems impossible

to put some things behind me

why? Third Avenue bar

in the 50’s a juke box

doing Moon River

the taste of gin. None of this

is me, and what a dumb

thing to keep in mind.

But all of it is always here.

18 December 2005
EXAMINE?

A road riding. A goat going. We know something about knowing.

Put the pieces of the flower together and read the answer.

It happened to me the way night did or my eyes tired from looking all day.

18 December 2005