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SCREE

It's one of those days again
when I want to keep using the word scree
hard as it is to work it into
conversations not about mountain climbing
one says it's going to snow today
and another says seven inches or no
says another twelve twelve you'd think
I have fallen among mystics apostles
patriarchs days of the week

I am Jacob I looked at myself
in the mirror and said Call me Jack
and all the rest said Jack is for John
not for Jacob though Jack sounds
so like Jacques which Jacob turned
somehow into in France how do they
get away with doing such things to
ordinary words? but I still insist
you call me Jack Jack means money
flag and flagstaff shoe tool spinning
gizmo sailor any man in the street

don't worry about the French we're here
waiting for the snow to cover our arches
with aches and pains and Jack's the name

I wake up full of investment strategies
blank notebooks for instance just fill them
with words and words are free use them
fill the book and sell it think of what
a Shakespeare notebook would be worth
especially in ink and start-up cost only
a buck at the Dollar Store you'll get
30,000% return on your investment
OK Jack it goes with the territory the lost
goldmine the crazy old man with the Coca
Cola patent he'll sue their socks off
be with me whatever my name
there's only one of me most days
and most of me love you I am your Jack
spill me down your hill the sun comes
out one last time where had it been in?

16 March 2004

A DERIVATION

after Ethan Abramson

*He said something but I am
not sure he said something
but I am not sure he said
something I needed to hear
and if I did maybe he
meant what he said and also
wrote it down so I could
see it and be sure and rounded
his old a out and made it o*

*because he wrote something
and made it something
but is it something he said
that he wrote down or was it
something he just wrote down
about what somebody said*

*the way I wrote our just now
when I say something
that he wrote down that somebody
was saying something
and just kept writing till
something gets said*

or not, sometimes there is no
way ever to be sure

and he's not sure either
I know that for sure
because he said so
and wrote it down
and his I became my he
but his he stayed he.

How many of us
ever said or will say
anything let alone
something let alone
something said
worth saying and do I
I do and I do
but I'm not sure
are you or is he

who said something
but I am not sure
what he meant
or if I heard anything
would I even then
be sure he spoke
and I heard and that

some meaning happens
so I would say it too
and try to mean it
the way I only say
what I hear
I listen hard
and write it down
like a kiss you steal
when everybody's drunk
and nobody remembers.

16 March 2004

[Dream effluvia:]

Four red eights
a double deck
warm Chinese calligraphy
chased me through
the last three hours

sleep I tried and then
the Eight of Hearts
would wake me
or Sixteen Diamonds
for sixteen loves

and eight means quickly,
do it fast behind the bushes
of the gentle heart
to which so quickly
the animal ascends

eight red lights even never stop me.

17 March 2004

=====

Certainly I don't want to tell
what's on my mind.
If I peel that away you'll see
the aching vacancy inside.
Echoless transparency of it.
You are the only thing I ever thought.

17 March 2004

SLALOM

Skier downhill
resting in his avalanche
awaiting rescue

speed means something
only for a while
the rest is being buried
in particulars

hearing the search party's cries
answered them weakly
a dog will come

tonight you will sit by the fire
and complain: time
did this to me
we are poor little creatures
caught in its gears

nothing broken
call again
the dog is near.

17 March 2004

LOST IN THE HERMENEUTIC TRIANGLE

How can poems be long
and still say a thing?
Or belong to one
who might read them,
carrying the words
around in mind
for a while afterwards,
ballast, scripture,
science, truth?
All you know
is what they say.
And all you think
is what they said.
Say. Think. Know.
Sink without a trace.

17 March 2004

NIGHTSOIL

But these too are things I think,
not the dark cabbages I only trust
that rise up to be said

nightsoil they call
what comes out of us,
in China they spread it on the fields
and strange wheat answered.

17 March 2004

O HAZARD

me clear
o dative ear
that speaks
by listening

2

the very small number
of all human sciences
intercourse all night
and animals
evidently multiply

and schools of fish
act out calculus

18 March 2004

SPEAK ME

the way words used to
before they slept
the famous Adorno aphasia

calamitied into coma,
betrayed by what they had
themselves betrayed—
the heart by numbers?

no – that all beauty
seemed to be some
people's own

and they owned
the lovely and the true
so had the right

to kill the incongruous.

18 March 2004

=====

ran out of words
just as I was coming to understand
why words run out

18 III 04

AMBASSADORS

We can no longer know
what people look like.
People don't have faces for us.
The sun is out after all the snowing.

As if somebody understands
but not near at hand
you can hear the word
uncoiling on the paper

from the gliding pen
you can from the sound of it
almost guess what she will be
writing to her friend

I have sat in a room
listening to the pencils rub
a dozen of them all at once
along the rough lined paper

so all the words had music too
I seemed to be the only one
who knew how to hear
since I was blind then

having no pencil
can you think without a word
can you have a word
without saying it

without writing it down
swish of pencils like long skirts
coming towards me up long corridors
crowded with wind

the words come close now
sparrows on the snow
they try to write
but all my blind eyes hear

is someone coming towards me
through a huge old house
I thought was home
always there always around me

skirts of her peignoir
swaying against her ankles
feet making no sound
on the dusty rich old carpet

until she is at me
and the pencils can lie down
because all the known words
have come between us.

18 March 2004

THE RISE OF THE HOUSE OF

someday the other thing will happen
write the truth down every day
and bring it close

this is just a scene from the long never

that always uncoils
down the corridors of always house
and comes to meet me

my Madeleine my mercy.

18 March 2004

=====

return of the repressed

the blue river

turned red

the boat sails beneath the sea

sped by what wind?

listen!

18 III 04

DERIVATIONS

after Cody Schreger

Kindly check your feet before exiting the aircraft

because they must be very big indeed
to hold you on this narrow earth
my mother was 5'2" wore size eleven
there is no reason, no proportion,
I mighty magic of the never-ending renaissance,
no Golden Section,

these Pyramids of Egypt are not buildings
not temples not tombs not reminders
they are nothing but the boltheads of the screws
that hold Africa to earth, hold earth in place
and make you *have* a mother,
kindly, a kindly mother
is our matter,
the rapt and radiant *substantia*
from which *essentia* dances out and
shows its nakedness, its *esse*,
it is being, is ant and eagle, any friend
dear friend of all such lonely givings

the craft that brought you here
crashlanded in an ocean meadow
among the waves the seat flotation cushions
bob up and down like metaphors in Homer
and your feet can't find the floor,
there is no land anywhere, none
of your preparations counted,
every minute's an emergency, nothing
ever ordinary, your feet flurry
in the yielding waters, water lily,
flower head, drowning satyr, how your lotus petals
open, lymph, nymph, lachrymal duct and dactyl dying,
leave your body home next time you fly.

18 March 2004