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MAY DAY

I want to know what it means
this May this might the roman road
the left and the right

the blue hibiscus
blossoming dew-drenched in the lost garden,
ivy ripped off brick, old black car
full of the whole family on its way into exile
with no dog, exile is rudimentary,
exile is the most common flower,
what does it mean, the empty basilica
the beggars on the steps of every building,
the empty beer bottle at roadside
under the hedge by the whippoorwill’s nest,
the birds and their restless upward home-
careening Jerusalem pilgrimages,
can it be that some of them never come back,
is flying as futile as it seems, is beauty,
up and up and always fall back, groundling
drowned among the nenuphars, are you,
are you beyond beyond, the one I mean,
what does it mean to be a mirror
and have somebody look you in the eye
and say I am fifty years old today or eighty
or finally I turn thirteen, and it’s the same
someone, the same one, woman or man,
what does it mean to say I as if
that little word was question and answer
all complete and good forever,
what does it mean to open a mouth
and say something and wait
and wait for an answer, o that gap
or yawn of time when your mouth
is open o that is good, that is gap
and time rushes past unchanging,
and who is speaking, and even more
tragically, preposterously, protestantly,
who could possibly be listening,
are you, does the tree bark listen,
and why, what does it mean to be
moved by another, what does it mean,
this one dove on one lawn, and a
green leaf rake leaning on a linden tree,
to get there without seed, without seeking
and be greasy with sheer finding,
lamb fat and basil, warm yogurt sauce
with olive oil attuning the fragments,
salt and cinnamon, to examine the leaf
until you forget all about death and the crow
hollers at you from the hill don’t leave yet
the movie is only beginning, just cup
your empty hand over your empty ears
and listen to the dancers, their heavy grace
pounding on the stage, on the hollow ground, 
listen, and what does it mean when birds 
start talking and you start understanding 
and the subway map seems unfamiliar 
and the gorgeous overpass at Smith-9th Street 
looks out over endless Ukrainian grasslands, 
and you wake up before dawn at all asking 
suppose all this while I was wrong, suppose 
everything really is different, I was born 
with the wrong bones and don’t have a clue, 
and you get up and stare out the window 
we all have windows, I pray we all have windows, 
and you see something out there, anything 
a cat or a fence or a car singing to itself 
and you say this is my clue, this, and go back 
to sleep and never know it and you wake 
with us in a world full of clues, everything 
everywhere gibbering and making signs 
read me, read me and weep, read me, omnia 
exeunt in mysterium, everything that exists 
is grounded in mystery and this mystery 
holds your hand and kisses the nape of your neck 
and whispers Darling, there is a whole 
number smaller than one, there is an animal 
you can catch in any woods, you can hitch it 
to a wagon you can learn how to build 
and it will draw you slowly to a place
with no shadow where you can learn one
other thing, and the very one you love
will press that beloved hand of theirs firmly
on your bare skin and tell you yes
you love me for a reason, I am your reason,
since every secret is hidden in the other,
begin with the other, the scary person even you
can hear at night rummaging around and moaning
under the ruins of the burnt down church, no moon.

1 May 2004
ROMANTICISM

(ROMANTICISM)

(ROMANTICISM)

(for the reading at Poets Walk, 1 May 2004)

Romanticism is the root (not always conscious) conviction
or working method
that the world around us has something to tell us.

That all things of the animate and mineral world are not chattels or
provender or raw material but interlocutors,
mysterious other parties
in an infinite conversation with themselves and us,
a conversation into which we are born
–it takes years sometimes to figure out what the subject is
that all the things in our world are talking about
and we talk too

Romanticism asks
and its truest way of talking is always a question

Keats (who gives now and then some resounding but troubling answers)
knows (in his great Christmas letter) that the answer killeth but the question
giveth life.

Romanticism at its best resists closure.
If the truth is in the other, then this (however comely, shapely, compelling, comforting), this can only be a station on the way to that. Which in turn will be a waystation.

Assertions, in other words, really make sense in the context of other assertions (in other words),

like Coleridge’s great unfinished (unruined) poems, Novalis’ aphorisms, glints of magical gemstones bedded in the unreliable visions deep in the mines of Falun,

romanticism is ruined by rhetorical finish (what Olson called the ‘smooth’),

and is reawakened by wonder. And wonder is confusion, bafflement, not just kidlike awe.

Romanticism intuits that the world as interlocutor finds in us adequate respondents –

the romantic presumes to ask and presumes to listen to what is spoken in any voice in response

and if our voice can be lifted (\textit{voce aliquantulum elata}) a little to respond, then we have fulfilled Romanticism, and with it the great hope of the Enlightenment that the nobility of the noble savage be reincarnate in the modern human, \textit{Edel sei der Mensch} cries Goethe, Let the human be noble!
the first Romanticism discovered Nature as a presence and a supreme value,

now the second Romanticism, now, must discover that we ourselves are Nature,

we have no other.

The natural is a word that can be spoken only by us.

Our romanticism vitally abandons the appetite for answer, and indulges the passionate addiction to response.

The characteristic product of the first Romantic movement was Marxism. What will be the flower of our own?

May Day 2004
poetry a payback
old debts
unspoken
old grudges
paintballed on
so many enemies

1 May 2004
This blue
I know
you be

an a surly
0
man wai
ts for th
e bus

last man in
Peru who
smokes your
cigarette

ROTA
my nude book

*The Bible*
*Abashed*

to tell
the tru
th at
last
THE MYSTERY

What the mystery
really means

a color picks you out

a lover handles you and then

joystick and crucible,
a mind at the door.

1 May 2004
MAH JONGG

_for Roger Deutsch_

When you come back to America at last
you’ll be able to speak Hebrew right to left
like a middleweight Chinese gambler
listening to Hank Williams all night.

1 May 2004
Night has or any
could tell a story

*a girl throwing a diamond ring*

*away twice*

but keeping the third one

the henna’d hair

veil of the Temple

1 May 2004
<late> ===========================

I was an alphabet
and people kept moving
the parts of me round
to make me say
what they think they mean

I was weather over the prairie and a hawk
I was a man remembering too late
a ship he meant to sail on

but the ship sank on its voyage out
and he’s busy writing letters now
explaining to all his friends
how he’s still alive, wondering to himself
why death suddenly left him alone.

1 May 2004
And then the new seed remembered its song
and the city started uncurling around my bones
full of sophomores and scientists, a new Bible
was at everybody’s doorstep I had written overnight
because the night gods let me and the day
gods were still fast asleep. I am language
in your lap and on your scalp and underneath.

Now what are you going to do?
This book won’t close.

2 May 2004
CARWASH

The least I could do is translate
every word and every thing
into something else
on its way to the opposite
then bring each home safe.
Then we could really begin.

2 May 2004
IN THE GARDEN

As if Easter again
and who is the rain
this time, Gardener,
to kiss me awake?

A fox prowls on the hill
it is too hard to understand.
Blue jay on new grass
is no easier.

For a moment I thought
a wind from the south.
To be with you
is be unbounded,

busy, busy things
so quick around a moveless soul
deep in the bone
no god can touch.

2 May 2004
THE ENEMY IS RATIONAL ADVANTAGE

Christ’s mind was slain,
he woke triumphant
pure flesh and soul.
He had defeated the alien
enemy, cosmocrat, organizer.

2 May 2004
OPENING THE TRUCK WALL

ram the bad thought home to
eat this animal the broad
horn splitting the same rock
you are mistaken in the web
too heavy too thick. You rut.
You root. Come rain beggar us,
come ice & shave the sky away
here huddled in the moan
an old man with funny things
coming out of his head teaches
us to be stone. I found this
by the water when there was water,
I wanted too few things too much

and that made me a sailor,
to crack the horizon, to jam
myself into the places you lost.
A park bench in the dark B.C.
an aurochs cowboy on a straße
bent across Brandenburg
through grass made out of fire
leaves the sand beneath it
turned into glass. Natural
and green and hard and dead
a tombstone for Christmas
and over the soft anvil of
a woman’s middle Ludwig
Klages broke the mind.
That thing that came
from outside our natural space,
archons wielded it, to trap
our natural energies into *willed
*patterns* favorable to their design.
Every sign reminds us of their rule.

Language is the muttering of slaves
bent to their oars churning
a dark ship through incomprehensible seas.

2 May 2004
The French say *abîme* the Irish say *ocean*.
It surrounds us, unbound it bounds us,
we drown in it to survive.

2 May 04
This last dawn
I wake to see

the other one
the face

sometimes at the window.

3 May 2004

(dreamt)