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Talk to the tarpaulin madame

talk to the rain
the gold-rimmed glasses on the
table or your eyes
how much you see this
evening this morning miss
'rimmed with love' as if

and then another policy
rehearsing to discover
what was never lost
viz. is pronounced videlicet
your legs holding your pelvis
high above the earth
an offering of a *bowl* it means
empty of everything but light

they carry them across the street
deliver them by subway and everyone
to whom this chalice comes
drinks a different wine from it
which means you need me just as much
as I need anybody

it can still tell the truth and be weird
your hair can be green and still be hair

help me to understand the mere,
the fancy stuff comes with explanations
wrapped around it like Taiwan candy
men lose their hats in a high wind
or later you find written *big boat small sluice*

everything is like that madame
because there is no place we can stop
and courtesy is full of strangers
empty houses breed violent dreams
with Persian quinces and satin ropes
and oranges rolling by the fireplace
full-rigged ships a-sail on blue Dutch tiles

ki lived in the coal bin for you madame
I mouthed obscenities in mirrors underground
hoping to learn the pure old Aeolic
I wore my hair down to my kneecaps
held a falcon hoodwinked by the jesses
I hurried out into the steel sunrise
and begged a garbage truck to break the wall
between me and the absolute

there is always something waiting to be there
under the tarp its cool to love the rain
I like the symmetry of your fingers madame
one hand makes up for what the other doesn't

until all of your is doing it and I am too
rubber bands and easy money and always
when you wake things feel a little better than they did
in the doomed republic of the day before.

23 June 2004

=====

The country is full of strangers sunlight
agitation of waves in at the near shore
as if something were busy out in the mist
that's rafting half across the Sound
so you can see the land beyond
but not what's in it, it is the closer thing
that stays invisible,

the eye

can see everything but the eye,
slow tumult of pewter cloud corrals the sun
and the sea turns that sheen too

suppose the whole earth actually is
one great eye staring into space
and we who live on it are busy acting out
transactions it perceives in the far-away
such eyes see, hold, remember
and make us improvise as best we can
the wars and raptures of all the rest of space---
all we do that hurts so much is represent.

23 June 2004

The feel of a rock in my hand.

Tapping on it, the live resonance
it somehow has inside.

It knows. A rock knows
I'm touching it.

When I tap it, the strange
resonance my fingertips feel
is answering. A rock answers.

This is what I know so far.
It is white, and has a soft
clothly luster, and veins
of pale brown. Heavy
as it should be, we know
those things, how heavy a rock
should be, and this one is,
from Church's Beach, rolled
in the endless offering of tide.

The rest is guesswork
or technologic stuff
with Mohs and acids and reagents ---
the two ways we move
away from what we touch
into those strange "fashions of forsaking"
we call the Sciences.

This rock, this one from Church's Beach,
could kill a man or hold
flimsy poems down in wind,
or held to the forehead would
tell strange pictures from a world before men

but there were women then
in dark skirts patrolling a hillside
with a storm coming on, the sea
busy at their feet. Then a red thing
like a heatless sun came out
and looked at them from the low sky
and they looked back.

This rock
could look no more, the natural
is frightened of the personal, and slept.

Mostly a rock is sleeping
but this one got tapped and woke
inadvertently perhaps but who
can really know what I was thinking
or the rock was dreaming.
Everything is connected already.

That would be my answer if
one of those women -- all of them

walking surefooted with their eyes closed ---
should open her eyes at me and ask.

23 June 2004

=====

When I lie back on the deck
and look up at the clouds
and go on looking, I begin to feel
a certain shame, a voyeur's
blush rebukes me as if
I were looking at something
I have no right to see --
a smile ten miles long
dissolving, a soft significant lift
of an immense lip
as if to speak
some word it would kill me to hear
and I wouldn't even know that I'd been slain.
It is dangerous, this sky, the immense
unrepeatability of cloud talk,
their faces, their immense unreliability
which all adds up to beauty.
And I am more comfortable writing this down
than I was staring up at them, sly
child at a forbidden window.

23 June 2004

Cuttyhunk

<late> =====

the organism

alters

the thick impasto of the evening sky

lets go

of your desiring eyes

and then there's nothing

waiting for you hard rubber

an oyster shell

broken things broken things

up there and down here

here.

23 June 2004

VERTEBRAL ODE

Such a shiver in the spine
Wirbelsäule a column of
whirling confusions, vertebrae,
that are *for the moment*
fixed in place, translating
your every velleity
into more or less meager act
--do

as little as you can
get away with doing, this
damages the earth less,

the 'nerve'

that gets broken in a stroke,
Duncan's read of Eisenhower's brief aphasia
the nation's fear
for if the king can't talk
how shall the people
think their way together in the market
and if we can't think together
who will save us from the trees
the lichen the pirates the secret
mildew in our house, the honey?

And wasn't that what Aaron did
doubting his babulous brother
that tongue-tied Moshe, didn't
Aaron becalm themselves and gold
themselves and set up priests?
While Moses burned the calf alas
the priests are with us still,
"damaging a nerve" in me,
a crack in sacred history
through which we can barely creep or crawl
into the beautiful green land before Jordan
when we were free.

Or so it seemed to Blake
(our brother not our master)
who found in 'priestly imposition'
love lost and the imagination doused --
yet there are children
(and I was one I think) who knelt
before the red votive glass where the little candle flickers
and worshipped in 'spirit and in truth'
and had their vital spirits kindled by that flame
but what they worship is perhaps
not the god on the altar where the candle's stored
but the flame itself, the red glass glow,
what humans had done to the dark and the light
to make the solemn *mood of the occasion*

which is all they know of God.

And why know more,

the senses ask.

All the ink in the world

couldn't float or drown one whale.

The skin on your back

revises theology.

This is what I believe.

And that is your back too,

“whoever you are,” the sacred

unknown from which you come

always feeling something

always stumbling godwards

into this holier now.

24 June 2004

SIGNS

Edging closer. Semaphore

from ship to shore.

Send more men,

the sea is hungry,

send more ships.

My emptiness appalls

24 June 2004

allocentric

if the mind only *could* take the other as its 'own' center---
so that the center of this would always be *there* ---

this would divine us, deify, reify, make us kingly, thingly,
make us real.

24 June 2004

<late> =====

who can be said of it or certain
which hour comes before
the death or the breathing

so many mistakes to be made
escapes
from the prospect over the harbor
so many nights walked her
almost till dawn and never
got what either of us wanted

and died, she died, after,
and I didn't know it, for years after,
knowing nothing, knowing all the stuff
in my mind going on
was only always about a dead woman
how could it be?

how can things go away and leave other things
the harbor the flags of merchant ships the fog?

24 June 2004

THE ELDER ORDER

The elder order
shivers in the wind:
a spiderweb blown ragged
its core intact

so few things to say
in fog
the elder order has its way
and we who are young

resist
the winged champions of it
we say We are different
Do not depend

on gravity, We have poetry
and compose divinity
We do not need
the faded blueprint of the real

so seeing this discomfited spider
is a sort of triumph
that nature works against itself
wind against weaving

and we might win after all
--but we rend our meshes too
we break the mind
and abandon what it finds

and then in terror I understand
that maybe we
are part too, tender,
of this arrogant Decay.

25 June 2004

Cuttyhunk

=====

Spider webs turn me on. wet ones
a-glisten with dew or sea fog
when the sun is trying to break through
the grey day and there is no spider in it

I have to make up a new handwriting
to praise such functional asymmetries,
something legible and weird as quiet
people walking on their way to work.

25 June 2004

KAWASAKI

rapture diligent enquirer the world is on time for you and me
motorcycles rusting downhill in the fog I also want to ride
into the sea and out again and bring her back with me
whoever she says she is I find at or near the bottom of
this web this wet this roar in the back of the mind.

25 June 2004

SALT

salt air corrodes
things they say

it is relation
in deep fog

not a ship a boat
not a cut a hole

things they say
protect us

the long tunnel
of our going through.

25 June 2004

=====

Simpering sunshine

trying to talk its way through fog--

I hate that mood.

Be grey cold wet thick,

voyager,

resist what is obvious.

Corrode.

25 June 2004