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as an introduction to *Opening the Seals*

Understanding where the light comes from

Aquitaine the old
beforeness, how they said,
the basqueness, how,

into the Lascaux of language I have gone
to meet you there

furor for furor matched—
it breaks the brain to be there
where the words are still half rock
half god

matter and there is no god,
not yet.

To get over and over up there
down in the deepest streets
the contradictions
of blue light in red meat

until I am parsed
by you and by you
made to speak.

1 September 2004

=====

Not to know so much
is a nice religion

go out to the barn
and see what the neighbor's up to

that's enough. That's Goethe
in Weimar, Faust on the North Sea.

Reclaim the mind
from those who mean to use it—

base alchemy
to use the holy light just to see.

1 September 2004

=====

The tree has fallen
in the forest
and can you hear me?

I am alone
with all the answers
ready to tell,

a strip of sunlight through the underbrush.

1 September 2004

WORD IN UNKNOWN LANGUAGE

Does the word mean *voice*
or does it mean *morning*?

Or could it be both? Both wake us,
want to, from the dark of silence

sever us from dream.

Our Lady of Language pray for us.

Now is the hour

of our talk.

Just talk to me.

*

The man couldn't move
we needed an ambulance
an ambulance is a think that walks for you
carries you with it

we had with us people who had spoken
Magyar from childhood
but somehow that didn't help
wasn't clear

I had to do the communicating myself
gestures and English, the Hungarian official
tried to understand,
warned us do not bring

the break-leg man to local hospital
hospitals are terrible
but what could we do?
Or was it Maltese?

It was Hungary, the cars were old,
one American from the '50s, red,
with fins, so strange,
our car but couldn't speak our language,

it's not fair, or Basque,
that's what I tried,
counted to ten in ancient Aquitaine
the primal language of all Europe

and that changed the situation.
The helpful policeman could speak English now,
fueled by the mother tongue
and helped us.

Language helps us.
Language is us. Our Lady
of Language pray in us,
pray as us, teach us to count

to ten and back again,
heal the man's leg so he can walk
heal the tongue so we can speak
to people in the street. Heal the street.

2 September 2004

=====
I heard a new bird this morning
hubble bubble it said sweetly
many times over, a liquid sound
such as Persian poets
put in the mouths of nightingales,
their bulbul could aim at this
the sound I heard this morning
in autumn cool and the leaves
dancing sunlight. It said
what it said, it didn't whistle,
it was a comment, not a noise,
not a signal. It called,
the first word rising,
the second fell. They were words
I almost understood but the bird
I had never heard before,
a bird who made the morning
speak in syllables. I walked
into the trees to put out seed,
I said his words back to him
as well as I could
so he would know whatever he could
know of my intentions.
As much as you do, yourself,
I think the bird said.

2 September 2004

=====

Quick leaves through window screen
onto the checkered paper fall.
Shadows. Moire of screen
and wind, comings and goings
of the leaf shapes, which are dancer
shapes now, advancing, retreating,
always tending towards,
not side to side. They find me.
Outside, the carpenters are hammering.
Percussion. Everything fits. That sort
of morning where I wake into your voice
needing you more than before.

2 September 2004

=====
Only so many waitings
then the hour
camels pausing at the door
everyone alive
knows the smell of their breath
smells like time
and the orchids wither on the roof
and the garage calls with bad news
and far away the glaciers you see
grow smaller and smaller

You know all this of course
the carpenters
are hammering out code
and you're afraid to think who
is busy deciphering all these signs,
maybe the ones who supervise
the huge whitish pinkish mottled anaconda
that lives a mile away where the road bends
they showed you last night
when you were sleeping and could not look away.

3 September 2004

=====
Come not to the bespoken
but the random *found*
a ship amidst archipelagoes
stuffed with strange meat
that talks in its sleep

there is no language yet,
the Plain of Shinar's still to come
all our Basques are trying
stones and consonants along the way,

experiences on the road to say.

This is ship. We meat.
In sleep mutter. Some hear.

All we can do to get there is to listen.

3 September 2004

DRACONIC MEASURES

Love the world
anyhow.
Lick my fingers
lick your lips.

*

The enemy is obvious,
it's the friend that's subtle,
find one if you can,
good morning, lagun,
maite zaitut.

*

But where the rock has ears
the birds have pens to write stuff down.
Attend to random gists of information.
All the rest is lies.

3 September 2004

=====
I have to switch to modes of weather

I was a fireman
in that life
a goldfish admiring ivy
I still kiss brick
you are my arch
made mesh
of my loose ends
moiré the autumn after

I will not give you up
you're poetry
the green cars block off mythic streets
what we dream about
doesn't have to come true
it came already
it all depends on where you
stop for breath

ballrooms full of you.

4 September 2004

PICTISH MIRROR

antique tongue depressor
hairbrush of a dead woman

will you dare to look close
the sweet mamaloshn of the dream
tells you enough

there is no language
where you come from

no favorite food, no olive oil,
just something at your side
or sometimes behind you

pale, like the other side of a shadow,
the shadow's shadow
that stands up in the middle air and marches
and shows you where to go

yes, that you, the one
the new found language talks to
when I can make from
time to time my own shadow listen.

4 September 2004

=====
The early part of the day
means something I hold.
A long thick fabric
like a runner down the hall
flushed with twilight
crimson and dark sand.

But it is morning down here,
the light looks like someone.

someone I never knew
years ago, sitting on the steps
down Sutton Terrace
dark sand the color of her hair

and she was weeping.
Morning is so cowardly and wise.
You have not yet consented to time.
Nothing moves unless you let it.

5 September 2004

=====
In those days there was nothing but the street.
Point Lookout once a summer
maybe where we could see four states
at once or was it six
and the escarpment ends

though I knew no such word then
for what lifted us in never-ending sunlight
over the Hudson plain.
In those days there was no rain.
No rain, no words, no understanding.

Only books I read, to try to find
how people meant inside, because
in books they talked but all around me
no one spoke of anything but weather.
I thought that books were a street
I lived on, and people walked
and went somewhere and came back
sooner or later with a lot to say.
A view of six states or was it five.
Which way was I looking. My father smiled.
All he ever loved was ambiguity.

5 September 2004

THE SECRET BODIES

of so many sacred
bodies bidden
and biding in my street.

They hide in me:
the words give shelter,
portico for Leiris was Y
and my street was S,
I lived among the letters
that were colors,
Brown at the corner of S.
R was north, my name
and my direction. Rrrrrr.
But my hair was brown
sort of, with some wine
in it and fire, the time
was wrong for being blue,
the time was Wartime they said,
time is a kind of camouflage:
color of a camel walking
through a date palm grove
remembering the names of God.

What can anybody know?
The bitter silences
inside the alphabet
when no fluid comes
emming down to c me
before Avenue U.
I lived in the alphabet
and loved the rain,
that's all you need of me.

The rain kept people home
and let me read, rain
was the mother of ink,
rain was darkness and reading
and when the sun came out
the story stopped.
Tell no story when the sun is shining.

I wanted to find a room
white as a blank page,
wanted to line it with books
whose outstretched spines
would speak innumerable
sentences I must interpret,

the order of books on a shelf!
The orders they give!

For I was bidden as much as forbidden,
the words waiting and my family negating,
in my innocence I thought the words were free.
I thought they named all the things that could be me.

And I became every word I saw,
conquered every city that they named,
had every disease and every wife,
every word was the story of me.

5 September 2004

=====

how many stories
are in one letter?

finally
there is only hlbq.

5 IX 04

=====
Have I missed the hour?
I'd know by color.
What color is your name today,
your power?

I put on a stone green shirt
I am lichen, and black pants,
I am a swamp a marsh
full of bitterns and rats,
they will build an airport on my knees

you will land there
wearing your ski-shop knitted top,

the sea will try to befriend the mountain
the sea knows too much about the sky

the sea is the sky's long-suffering wife
a mountain is just one of those other women.

2.
But that doesn't put shoes
on your infant's feet –
I have no children
and they're too young to walk

instead I spread some leather
soft and thick and true
over the whole surface of the earth
so she or he can walk barefoot everywhere

I call it dream and let you walk there too.

3.

So it really is about labor,
unions, organizing, meat packers,
laundry workers, railroad men.
It really is about conditions of production
sale and resale, theft on a grand scale
and punishment reserved for petty thieves.

Destroy a country? Go to the White House.
Sell a joint and go to jail.
At *some* point [the] people have to figure it out.
They never did. They never do.
They can't think well, their wits
are dulled by aspiration and
the materials for thought they're given
is just the glue that holds them to the trap.

We need new materials for thought
and high motivation, humility, austerity and fun.
Dada poets died in the trenches
giggling as they saw the last light.
There never was a revolution.

All things so called were only political,
some cabal killing to replace another.
We need an economic revolution,

and economy is a household, economy is everyone.

6 September 2004

=====
I feel the unseen world
press so hard on me
the lords of Karma
who I am

I did it

having done this
endure the seeds of this
as they grow
to these
and these until
no part of the world
is free from that simplest doing.

Having not done that
I wait half-breathless
for the silences
to answer me
and tell what it wants,
the outside-me world.

But there is no such place.
I am left alone with God and you.

6 September 2004