SIX REED

Six deer.
Yesterday
we saw three.
But that was the day Five
and they were, two of them,
small. Smaller
than any fawns we’d seen
browsing alone our roadside.

Today is reed, that is, deer
going away. Today is \textit{aj}, ‘reed,’
which is \textit{ja}, ‘house.’
A day runs both ways.
A house tries to stand still.

A good day to stay home
and bind reeds. To make
quiet things at home
if home is what house means.

But a house is the place
a young man leaves
to find his home.
He is like a late-born fawn
in the woods, awkward,
tenderfoot, terrified
leaving shit behind him
when he’s scared and runs away.
He stands among the reeds
thinking the low hush and clatter
he hears are music.
Wind in the reeds.
Why should he think such a thing?

He knows no better,
what does a deer know,
a young man on his way?

Only a house
has information.
Only a reed can tell.

7 September 2004
WHAT HAS BEEN SOUGHT

Be near. Or fear. 
Or hid. Beneath 
the color 
the orchid lies,

form lurks 
like a serpent. 
Formal, the 
beautiful things 
behind their corsages.

Smoke. Very 
every lover wants 
somewhere else. 
“Who 
wore the roses 
on the cross?” 
the stranger 
asked, why 
is one thing ever 
marrmied to another? 
Marry me, 
the boy said. 
Infant. Orchid. Wedding 

meant wager. Cell phone, 
adipose tissue given form, 
conversation, talking 
trash at one a.m. 
too tired to stop talking. 
Telling. Color. Form. 
Orchid folded over
on its own fertility.
Like music maybe.

2.
Rinse. Drench.
Dance in wet clothes.

Customs and corsages
a dory to the dock
from that bright thing out there.
yacht. Orchid.
Inland waterway.

Typhoon. Big wind.
Big water. Big air.
The flesh tolerates
its imperfection,
animals never suicide.

3.
But we. Orchid.
Purple mind

fades. Angel.
And we.

Purple mind or crimson
kermesse, the girls as before
dancing, kerchiefs now, corsages.

Try to weep
uphill,
th ing feelings
back up into the heart.
An orchid grows inside everyone.
The suicide tries to tear up this flower
to get to the serpent hidden underneath.
Final venom of the system. The form.

8 September 2004
GRACE

1. A bird, a remembrance.
   You. I never knew
   a girl called Bird.
   Or a bird called anything.

   Everybody
   has a special name
   I have to know.

   How. Stare in the fire
   listen to water.
   Read everything
   that comes along.

2. Children study cereal boxes
   and milk cartons carefully.
   It is a terrible ironic place
   to print pictures of lost children.

   All children are lost to begin with
   housed among strangers
   trapped in a weird biology.

   Rooms. Walls. Ceilings, floors.
   No bird. Sometimes
   the closet calls. Escape
from the trap into a smaller trap. 
Homeopathic. Your closet 
can be big as a forest 
and all the animals are 
very quiet in it.

So quiet you can hear language 
itself speak, 
the word before the mouth.

8 September 2004
A PHONE

That they go is distant. A thing. A phone among others is a voice among same. Who called? I heard your ring. I smell lilies, that curious sweet sour smell of. A phone.

Think of all the words listening to your silence. They pour or seem to pour into your ear. One at a time. Word. Ear. Word. Ear. For a century or more this has been said and is still saying. People have been holding it to their ears and.

She wanted a phone she could hold between her legs, she told me so, I wouldn’t have guessed. And you don’t have to spell very well on the telephone, just every now and then you must say S as in sambucus or M as in martyrdom. Just to be clear about the names of who you mean or want. Mostly the other person’s ear does your spelling for you. It is a game for two listeners and no one wins.

9 September 2004
Can I have this to say
or is it only that?
A pronoun is something that glitters
in the sky of language –

in the light of it
you can see everything
and how it all connects.

Put *I* in front of every verb
and see what that word means
and then add *me* after it
and really know.

Can there be a hornbeam without you
or a nautilus or a semaphore
without me?

9 September 2004 (late)
NO WIND WHERE WE LIVE

It is good to hear you
do I hear you
is it your voice
the leaves impersonate

And this wind
that never blows
is blowing now, dawn
and autumn coming

monsoon meaning every
part of earth has
its moments of forgiveness
I stood before the shaman

suddenly was him.

10 September 2004
For there are stars
significators the tension
lives in the voice

some nights you hear
the whole sky
try to clear its throat

a gasp of light in darkness
maybe but the witches came
and taught me to want

And what do I want?
The thing they leave behind.

10 September 2004
Maybe there really is an answer
and I just missed it
sneezing at the ragweed and September
like a Latin poem
dividing my seeds into sorts and counting
I am nowhere and I begin.

But could that silence self be the answer
the silence in any number
waiting for the word to tell not what thing
it specifies
out there in the crowded world
but the distances alone,

antimony, guitar music, salt?

10 September 2004
Being wounded and waiting.
Having the ink
that’s made to speak
instead come out
and kiss your hands
to quiet them
with color,

making you the color
of what it
not you
tried to mean, tried
to ‘express
itself’ as the books
say, squeeze
itself out

out there
where the world is,
where you run
hurrying and waiting
for a miracle.

Miracles
wait for observers,
there are small forms of life
so adapted to the fall of light
that they can tell
when they are being seen.
Freeze when you look at them.
They feel the anti-photons
that swim back from the eye
to the reflective surfaces
(‘color’) from which the eye
stole all that meaning.
The colors of things.
The compensations.

They hide
only when you seek.

At the corner of the eye you see them,
stick insects, dawn fox, blue midnight deer.

10 September 2004
A constellation is a thing
our eyes wrote on the sky–

a cross, a swan, a warrior,
a bear, a beast
around the corner – these
are mirages, brother (pronounced Buster),
ot not stars.

_Buztan_, tail of an animal
as of a fox or wolf,
I try to call out to them
in the woods, I need you,
not to possess, just
know you’re there

_hire buztan_, your tail
flashing in the underbrush,
that bitter opaque shrubbery that men call time.

10 September 2004
In the old courtroom my wife
summoned for jury duty
was forced to remember out loud
her dead sister, long ago slain
by a drunk driver running a light.

Remembering is a river,
too many times
we write the same word down,
leaf fall, a voice in the woods
singing to itself, all alone,
going nowhere, nobody
listening but I hear.

10 September 2004
INSTRUCTIONS

Dip the ink into the pen: miracle! The doctor makes the painting sing. The statue prances round the room giggling at all the guests.

Living? Or just moving? Professor Klots explained the only proof of life is Irritability, apparently his word for responding to stimuli.

But she smiles at everyone. She sings from the 2D surface of the picture, Xerox of a photo of an oil painting by someone dead. No oil anymore. Just voice.

The icon of the Holy Mother weeps. All mothers weep for their children’s pain. She looks at us and cries. We look at her and are not sure – what do we feel?

Do we respond to stimuli? Do we care
about her tears the way
her tears (by theory)
care about us? And who is this we
and how dare I speak for it,

I who do not dare to speak for myself?
For us, darling, who have lost
so much time and space
but not this. We hear
the picture sing. We watch
the stone move. It smiles at us.
Or do I get that part wrong
again, and all the smiling’s
left to you and me?

10 September 2004 (late)
My father never told me many stories. This one he did. When he was in high school, in German class, German used to be taught in New York schools the way Spanish is now, there was an unruly boy. The teacher picked the boy up by the neck and held him out the window four stories above the ground while he went on lecturing. The boy became ruly. My father admired this teacher very much. He never told a story about the boy or what the boy said or did after. Maybe the boy never said or did anything ever after, all his life he felt suspended eighty feet above the playground and terrified. I feel that way myself. Maybe I am the boy. Maybe that’s why I can read German so well and can’t speak it at all.

10 September 2004