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WRECK

Reckon: Why is a window like a widow.

    Why is why not at the end of the alphabet?

Why does anything linger when I am gone?

1 October 2004  SM
The government hurts my heart.

At the bus stop
in the mountains
where so many workers wait
standing in mud, in rain
waiting for what never comes,
no cigarettes, no symphonies
each one looks up to the hill
and hopes and only knows
the government hurts my heart.

Can we do it together
can we imagine a place
and make it be there
by going there together
and being there together
in the silence of the alphabet
through the slim intestines of the rain
reaching, the hill
and maybe more than the hill
where no government hurts my heart?

1 October 2004
caught up in it as a man
with a woman on his mind
gets caught up with pictures
in his head and not much said

just some words that light up
the silence of those images
of him and her together
everywhere and these few words

make cartoon noises round
the soundstage of his head
or is it heart, where do we
stage those fantasies–

I read you that way too
a stumbler in a wheat field
crying out in mild pain but not
getting anything across, disturbing

crows maybe, heavy breathing
and the woman falls.

2 October 2004
TOO SOON AND A CORMORANT

Lascia me her song began
and that meant not whip me
but leave me, and why does pain
always feel like a departure

the smack of it the sight
of a coast receding – everything
that happens moves the boat

And we are elsewheres
to each other, hurting,
singing about it, dying alone
too soon and a cormorant
slips fast along the uneasy sea

the pain of love is to remember it.

2 October 2004
waking anybody takes a lot of nerve
whimsical princesses
half-smothered in pillows
wake with a half-smile
and make me feel surreptitiously
upright, like a tree
pretending to be just a friend.

2 October 2004
Crow. Yo!
With a motel ball
point pen
I try
pressing
down hard
to write the sky

with you (yo!)
in it, Crow,

your fierce sound
loves me
like a hard kiss.

2 October 2004
Everything fits
if you guess it in
enough. There is no
such thing as no
more room.
Imagine in.
Joseph with his foot
in the door
and Mary
stumbling to the floor
the sheep get smaller
the way they know how
and you kneel down
inside the fallen leaf
praying to them
to her to him
to rain to the leaf
itself outside
how can you
ever even know
where prayers go
whatever you
may have in mind,
prayer finds them
the way the sheep
finds hay
in the darkest corner
a woman’s shoulder
wedged against its flank.

2 October 2004
A city takes its name
from the first god they find
singing like a drunken man
under the ground when they dig up
where the market place will be

and they listen to her song
seeing the boundaries quiver
in the morning breeze
at the edge of sight –

drag the golden coulter here
to mark the limits
set up the boundary stones,

this is the *mundus* the ditch
that makes a world
of what’s inside it

a city.
One you make it you belong to it.

2 October 2004
DUOFOLD

Long time this fountain pen
given by FDR to his press
agent Myles F.Lasker of King
Features Syndicate before the war.
His name is on the orange barrel
he did not live to see the war.
The pen goes on talking.
I could tell how it comes
to be in my hand,
or make it tell you
but it would take all night.
Another life. Everybody touches
everything. That’s one part
of it. Nothing gets lost
completely. Everything remembers.

2 October 2004
But suppose I only dreamed it
the blue writing on a pale blue ground
like a letter mailed from Somerset
eighty years ago, Agatha Christie,
and I still couldn’t tell
a polite note on squirearchical letterhead
from God’s hand scribbling the sky,
what good am I in your Eames chair,
how can you listen to me?

For I was one
who thought everything that happened in my head
was worth the world, was worth your while,
I hurried to tell you, I was one
who thought I could walk right up
to what I thought and touch it, there,
where you live, on the modest avenue
of value-bearing particulars,
dogs, linden trees, churches, nasturtiums
and all of that is just the same to me,

having a right to your body as much as to my own.

3 October 2004
I say less than I think
and more, I say
the words that saunter from my head
—that can’t be what you call thinking—
and say them to you
because they tell me to.

3 X 04
Chittering squirrels in the woods
and exasperated birds.
A few minutes later a fox coughs,
a helicopter comes by low and cruises me,
passes and recurs.

What do they know,
animals, machines?
And in the middle I know nothing,
hearing noises, feeling breezes,
choking on guesses
by which I live.

3 October 2004
How long things last
depend on who I am.
Otherwise it’s Fifty-seventh street,
Wolff’s Deli, miracles
below the floor –
the Roman Empire is down there
and all the blood that Mithras shed.
And all the souls that Mithras saved
shuffle around us
bringing rye and pickles.
All waiters are the recent dead
come back to take care of us.
When our souls are saved
we get born in the next world in line.
Adam was our first sinner
to get the word, and the word
makes a new world.
We are made out of wax,
beeswax and honey and feathers
hold us together, we are placenta
and reminiscence, devils and raisins,
yeast –
    all the tiny animals that come with us.
It was of these
that the Master of A Garden spoke
giving Adam dominion–
over yeasts and hollyhocks and such,
only these. The rest
belong to Great Time
who owns you too.

3 October 2004
I am by most
a needer
nude
    then a falcon
fallen then a night
around you

when I begin to speak
brash
    as crows creak
wake, wake,

I am something
I want to tell you

only when you listen
will I know what it is.

4 October 2004
A land full of places
interrogates an arrival
who carries time’s passport
in his face but still needs
space to sleep in.
An émigré
challenged by
border guards of distances alone.

Once on a clear day over the desert
I saw the curvature of emptiness
away towards a bent horizon
where a little smoke smudged the sky
over the Straits of Hormuz

and I saw that distance, like history,
is meant only to keep us from ourselves.

4 October 2004
<late> -----------------

Agronomist of dream
I kiss your spell

it keeps babbling
out of my lips

a word kisses its way out

There are sparrows waiting
to see what kind of town we’ll have

crown of maple tree
whores in the park

where the cleanest water in the county
burbles out of the patriotic fountain

we are healed by every word we speak.

4 October 2004
In the dream I am writing you a letter. The letter is about seeing you coming up the stairs. You are wearing a costume by which I recognize you even before I see the face you decide to wear as your own. I am trying to describe this costume, a dress, white, flower-patterned, unlike anything I’ve ever seen you wear or think you might wear, nonetheless I know it’s you. Once you gave me a list of all the clothes that are your own, and perhaps this was mentioned on that list. I’ve lost the list. In the dream I am trying to explain all this in a letter to you. The stairs I say, the dress, the face. The texture it seems to have. The recognition has a texture of its own, like seeing cloth and knowing how it feels but not touching it. I recognized you by something else, not your face and not your appearance at all, although I didn’t recognize you till you appeared. At the head of the stairs. Some other way. In the letter I am trying to explain how I didn’t see you till I saw you, but that seems obvious and dumb to say. There was some other way I knew you were you. This is the letter.

5 October 2004
They never know how little you remember. They may hope or guess but they cannot know. It is very hard to know – even you can’t really know what you fail to remember. Then suddenly the unremembered thing remembers itself in you again like a man coming around the corner or the sun coming over a hill. River. Something about a river.

5 October 2004
She was bareheaded
as if she was staying in a house.
Houses are so small
but tend to love us,
at least behave affectionately,
the ceiling stroke her head
gently tousle her hair
write poems on her hair
that sift down in soft white dust.

So she runs into the fields,
*ins Freie*, the free, the open –
no girls like poems falling on their heads,
no girls like love so silent

so bareheaded she endures the cold
interrogations of the stars,
Colonel Orion sneering at her
and fingering his bright policeman’s belt,
and all the little constellations
gibbering their endless questions,

o God, she thinks,
where is the moon, my friend?
I love the moon
the poor old hump up there
twenty-two days old,
where is the moon?
I want the moon to love me,
I want the moon to shine in my hair.

5 October 2004
Small celebrations who
embedded in a sort of haze
each petal of the word
moving differently in the time breeze

morpheme petals
I dare the word to mean me
coffee percolating through the maker

a makar is a poet
a blessed one, a skeptic
the nervous giggle of the intellectual
against the trendy ones,

the now-brows. A word
catches in my poem,
I have to clear my throat,

saying, re-saying,
ruby glass catching the sun
ruby glass votive candle holder
no candle in it
but the morning sun.

6 October 2004
Imagine the other side of poetry,
what you’d see if you look back at us
through *that* glass, us standing here
like nervous lovers in a cheap hotel
in the grand capital city we’ve read about
all our lives and here it is outside
all round us and the column with the admiral
on it casts its shadow on this very room,
we are a part of history after all, touch me,
I am real, we make each other somehow
into something accurate if small,
the long shadow of the admiral lays
itself down across our very bed
where one of us smokes and one of us
waits but for what, what, since
everything is here already, everything done?

6 October 2004