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PONDER.

The beginning
is weight. Gravity.
Neuter plurals
take verbs in the singular.
Classic style: the many
is the one.

Ponder this,
the gravid man,
virile woman,
fecundities of opposites.
We are food in each other.

Sometimes an idea
makes me ask
who is speaking?
Who said that
in my head?
but no one answers.
Saying
is not answering—
that’s finally
what I had to learn.

If only I could keep
asking but instead
I grow distracted
as a honeybee
and turn my wings
to the idea itself,
that dewdrop
of someone passing
or spoor or scat
of an intelligence
moving, knocked
on my bone
and vanished
leaving me only
with this trash,
this fascinating idea.

What good is an idea?
An idea inhibits thinking,
I want to know the person
who was thinking
the person who was speaking
inside me I thought was
me thinking, who is speaking
again and again
I must ask that,
asking not thinking,
being satisfied with
nothing but answers
from someone that answers,
the presence,
the being who thinks the thinking.
(after Ruth Shannon)

A.
This is my right foot
    and this is my left.
This is my wrong hand
    and this is my weft.

B.
Weft? What is weft?

A.
Weft is also woof,
a means in weaving,
weaving on the loom
weaves warp on wood
or warp in weft.

B.
Warp, what is warp?

A.
Warp is not true, bent
like an unplayable COULD,
immoral, out of true,
so that is my warped foot
and this is what’s left.

B.
Can’t you tell right from woof?
The woof weaves the web
the web remembers everything
every cloth you’ll ever wear
remembers two things: 
the loom or weaving frame on 
which it’s made and 
the first person’s body who 
ever wore it, cloth 
remembers flesh or 
body is the warp that bends the weave.

A. 
Then the weave remembers!

B. 
This shirt remembers your breasts. 
This hand is what is left.

7 October 2004
BENZOIN

Benzoin looking for the fire

I am sweet and need
to be needed

figs, figs and almonds

as I am
and not some other

I am looking for the fire
that releases my essence
by consuming me

I am nothing but essence
I am benjamin opoponax vetiver
no, I am galbanum no, frankincense no
I am nothing you can name

boy jasmine, Mr Lesbian, no identity

I am benzoin looking for the fire
that will free me
from identity
into pure being in your face

pure presence and no clinging

only the way a smell does
linger a little

and I am always after.

8 October 2004
BAD MAN

Move the boundaries, bad man,
we see you moving,
pulling the survey stakes up,
rolling the stone,
bad man, why are you changing
the simple shape
of what we never notice anyhow
till you change it,
if even then? What will you do
for an encore,
what will you do if we never notice,
bad man, move
the stars around in the sky
so our maps
don’t work at all any more,
bad man, or move
the definitions around in the dictionary
so words shiver
in an unaccustomed light and no book
makes sense any more?

How bad you are, how bad we all are
when we move!
The animals, who never move anything,
throw up their hands
in horror at all our doing and moving –
You will never
get there, the dog explains,
and even if you did, the cat adds,
we would be there before you
and we only seem to sleep.

8 October 2004
Oleaginous enterprises

sticky in the soul
the war heat runs

turns resinous
bakes on us
like oven scum

soiled hearts of oil men.
Greed.

Have ideas; sell things.
Philosophy
is the commerce of souls,

all persuasion
is commodity.
Glib global.

Agree with me.

9 October 2004
HOMECOMING

To something in my head
I want and don’t want
to share with you.
I keep shifting my sighting
instruments so that
what I look for keeps
appearing plumb
in the middle of you,
holograph in your lap
as if you were my house.
You are my house.

9 October 2004
NOSTALGIA

Which of all these exits smells like me. How can I get off the highway and not get even further from myself than I thought I was when I set out?

Men shave their heads to be or seem monks or phallic busybodies – who can tell which way when the damp soft hair is still falling past your eyes and the air feels good at least where you have never felt it, the unknown arctic of your head.

Any change is change enough. Just get off the road. Doesn’t matter what the exit’s called, what number.

The birds you see overhead are kabbalah enough, archangels, anything you need, count them, map them onto your lexicon insides.

Even now you don’t know. Just go, the destination rises to meet you plausible as your father telling you how to countersink a screwhead in pine.

Nobody knows. Green wood. Nobody knows anything, all wet, all arrive singing their same song.
We have been reared to understand
and trust that music is enough.

*Because I sang at last what I was made to sing*
I think I am fulfilled, an angel, almost home.
And this shadow doorway is the dearest place.

9 October 2004
Everything is a little bit before.
We taste the time,
noble as a lion’s roar
across the thicket of the afternoon.
I cower in the morning still,
amateur of light and earliness.
I pass with it along the lawn
till everything is yellow. Shadow nowhere. I need the liberty
of difference, Libra, meek
resentment on the balance beam,
envious, perfidious and beautiful.
People fall for me because
I love myself so well they’ll know
I’ll know how to love them too
and touch their lonely skin
with reassuring appetite.
Touch, grab, hold, never let go.
I’ll buy you anything you want
but never give you what is my own.

9 October 2004
The late to own by you an order
maybe The Emerald Hedgehog who
or in eagle latitudes replaces leather
books in short skirts a glass of moon.
It is too late for anything but names.

9 October 2004
BY THE SAWKILL

So this or that, so this water
ripping fast in front of me
yellow ripples as the stream
moves through the reflection of
the spicebush yonder, slate blue
ripples where it just takes on
the color of the empty space
between us and the sky –
which looks plain blue – must be
the dark of space beyond
and only this running water tells
the dirty little secret of the light:
it spills from darkness and
has dark inside it still,
reflection on reflection endless
and we dare to grieve.

10 October 2004
Things change.
The rate of infection parallels the sunrays striking the broken window of the kosher deli.
Nothing lasts.

10 X 04
I am avenue. 
I portuguese 
something sweet
amaro.

Amargo. A root
he said is bitter
even in Vandalusia,
fountain spray
shatters the sun.

Before there were Arabs
there were Vandals,
before them Romans
Basques Aquitanians

goats kicking
gravel down long slopes
lost hills,

I kiss you
in a night the
calendar left out.

10 October 2004
THE BLEAK RECEPTORS

know me.
It is a matter of Peruvian
blue potatoes
of ponderosa toothpicks
women rescued from history
that Portuguese stew
I am the eel of it
because you never listen
how many answers insist
who, or break the sun

or whittle the steeple
patterns fold on patterns
and the not so old woman
holds them so
light comes through pin pricks
where the chalk pounces

2.
aftermath solicit me
(I was usual
in love with strangelings)
stragglers strong,
coast and outcasts,
catgut, cat got
your tongue too, tied?
Rivery marsh
we spoon it out.

3.
Mnemonic breakfasts of the Iroquois
hypnomythic corn
clicit neighborly discourse
what the man next door did dream of,
I think of Mrs Briggs beyond the fence
wasn’t there in her day
best of neighbors
with her cinnamon buns and clear
evidence on our proper boundaries,
this land is yours, she said,
up to the top of the ridge, that stone
outcrop your hard map.
And I still don’t know what her dream was.
Only evidence of things seen,
known. Boundary stone.
And all I need to know beyond it.

4.
Can I examine my own genesis
who am so in love with exodus?
Where does history lead but laws?
I scrubbed the white plague off my wall,
I let the pigeon go—
isn’t that agronomy enough
for a people with no masters only bosses?

5.
And then I closed the book
and marked it well
to keep my place
a red grosgrain ribbon wet with rain.

11 October 2004
THE DAY THE LETTERS LEARNED TO SWIM

People try
to organize ideas.
Ideas taste like fish

so we can tell the difference
between an idea and something
that just happens in the head

And God is watching – the God
of aleph, I mean, and beth and gigmel.
God is watching when I try to think.

There was a time when Jews may
have known how to think and talk
but didn’t know how to read or write,

imagine that, the shame of it,
only the Egyptians knew such things
their signs and snakes and animals that spoke.

So when God drowned the hosts of Pharaoh in the Red Sea
(hallelujah! hallelujah!)
all their Gypsy language washed away

and all those mysterious letters by the hundreds
washed clean, simple,
so clear and clean the letters were,

almost all the pictures washed away from them
just simple shapes were left, a little hand
waving in the air to catch your eye, curves
curving back to kiss each other
to taste the taste of what the other knows,
just a handful of letters left

and the Jews fished them out of the reeds
after they had crossed and the sea
filled in behind them,

pulled the letters out like fish and shook them dry
and at the end of the day had twenty-two different kinds
no more, and God made them make do with that

and everything had to be made from twenty-two
no more and no less, everything had to be said
and done and made and learned and read from them

but the Jews didn’t complain much,
they were used to it by them, used to Him,
God always made them do peculiar things,

sweep yeast out of the house,
sleep outdoors in chilly autumn nights,
cut off pieces of the flesh,


Now I am a Gentile,
I go down to the sea
of Boltenhagen or Rockaway
and spend the weary afternoons
working through the shallows
trying to find the letters God forgot,
all the signs the Jews forgot to name,
I’m sure they’re still down there swimming,
swimming all these years to me,
come to me, you consonants of Atlantis,
the charred blackened tuna taste of
some vowel that nowadays only
the moon alone knows how to moan.

11 October 2004
If there were something I could tell you it would be this
I don’t know who you are I don’t know why
I have to begin every day by reporting to you
as if you sent me here in a clumsy submarine
years ago and I still carry the scars and every day
begins the same way telling you stuff you must know
already if you possess the powers I imagine you have
to have sent me here and be able to make sense
out of my interminable chronicle of dream and desire
as they say I say and I assume you do or why else
would the mandate be so strong I obey even joyously
most days but who in heaven’s name are you after all?

11October 2004