11-2004

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Some nights I write all night
while I’m asleep and never know
where the words are when I wake

I guess they go to you, the way yours
come to me and I write them down
while you are sleeping

and think they are my own,
it must be like that, yes,
since half of everything I read

seems so familiar
I can smell my sleeping skin
as I turn each page.

11 November 2004
Where are the places too
that I remember, the gone ones,
the gaieties?

Haymarket
when it was full of meat,
Rhinelander gardens delicate iron
terraces.

Nothing is as was.
Of course. But all that grief
is stored in me
as loveliness.

What to do
with the whole Brooklyn Navy Yard
brick-walled and sun-filled in my head?

I am an admiral of that doomed fleet
that sets out every day and gets nowhere.

Nowhere but here.
I run the world and have no time for me.

11 November 2004
SPÄTHERBST

Everything is a different color today.  
Or none.  
And sparrows on it, and finches  
that once were gold.  And no more leaves.

11 November 2004
Be simple, Phaedra.

You want what’s wrong,
it makes you want it more.

I never had a family,
I wouldn’t know.

11 XI 04
after Kendra Urdang

1.
**In these openings**

insert my head
and look around.
The thing I smell
is sort of God.

It is what I am for
and where I’m from,
the other side of being
from which life’s on loan.

2.
Stop now. Be here.
Inhale the noises
until between my ears
something like a name

begins to speak, the smell
names me,
but I can’t hear yet,
so much in love with the feel.
3.
There is a city
north of anywhere
Beyond the openings

the Iroquois called it
on their way through autumn
leaves looking for me.

11 November 2004
SAGITTARIUS

What feels inside me
as if an archer
sighting at the sky

somewhere up there
is the one point he must strike
with his only arrow

This point is the same color
same texture as all the blue—
you can’t look for it

you can only find it
at the tip of your last arrow.
Let it go. Maybe it

will know the way.

11 November 2004
ARMISTICE DAY

Things stopping.
Things remembering.
Too many.

Forgetting is a sexy game,
fun in the bathtub
everything gone.

The sound
your whole life makes
singing away down the pipe
towards the great mingling
modern people call the Sea
but Romans knew as deity

a goddess, Cluacina,
her shrine the brick arch
of the great sewer

lady of where all things go.

11 November 2004
Examine the evidence –
some god set it moving
some ship brought us here
where we get to do our choosing.

But why such speculations?
Could we be anywhere but where we are,
isn’t history just a dream we keep discussing,
haven’t we always always been right here

just you and me, lantslaint of the same idea?

*

When the shtetl was the moon
the birds were talking,
all we thought we were thinking
was just the birds talking,

and philosophy was your cousin’s nightie
making mysterious and pretty
her body underneath
mysterious and pretty by itself

but in a different way, such a different way.

*
I don’t think these are answers
at least not the ones you want,

I wake up every morning
into a different world

and you do too,
no deity and no Darwin,

the changes have been there
from the beginning,

we make the city with our eyes.

12 November 2004
Of course this particular
gold finch turns
out to be a dead leaf

but an elm leaf
from trees we thought were all gone
half a dozen wars ago.

12 November 2004
MORALITY

For years I’ve kept wondering
where the rabbit went
when Alice woke up.

We should make it our business to write
a sober, improving Victorian tale
about the Actual Rabbit

and what he was up to while Alice snoozed.
How he ate the mushrooms
grew and diminished, grew old and very young

and went out walking,
went out wooing, proliferated,
went to town.

And then one day he saw a man
wearing a bunny skin cap.
From then on he changed his religion,

sat in the mountains,
never went to church, never to market,
left all his wives and all his swivings

and thought himself right out of the book.

12 November 2004
NEW ENGLAND PORTRAIT

for Nora Wellcome

And the other skins are always waiting, crusts of bread, crumbs on the vapid face of Hawthorne’s bonny son. How pale we look before the years. Anyone seeking evidence for or against reincarnation need look no further than the American Child – a face to which nothing ever happened since the dawn of time, yet a character minutely practiced in the skills of greed. “Everything, everything,” my young nanny sighed, I have tried all my life to obey her smoking lips. To kiss then when I could in you or you. And where did that desire come from that so imprinted me? How could a slim brunette New Hampshire Frenchie create a whole man, her nineteen years beget my scores and scores? It all happens in a dream. And all our sorrow comes when we wake up and know the dreams we come from are not the same.

12 November 2004
Euhemerus, please

take away the gods if you must
but don’t take away the stories.

We live by those.

And surely from the stories themselves
a wiser age
will resurrect the gods again.

Which is one other meaning of the Great Return.

But take away the stories and leave astronomy,
king lists, history and we have nothing.
The stars burn out and leave the general night.

12 November 2004
WRITING

How different each notebook feels,
the feel of what is possible to say
changes with the paper, with the pen.

What leaves and filaments we are,
blown in the wind from an unknown country.

12 November 2004 SM
Blossom. Bluet.

Nada now.
The snow knows
where they are.

How quick winter seems.

12 XI 04
CANCION DESPERADO

My eyes need another sea.
Island is land enough.
Sea sees a change.

Change me,
I am tired of all this loving,
stolen kisses, borrowed wings.

The strange hurried orchestra
a drowning man hears
will concert my requiem right here.

Come up from music changed–
was it my throat that sang?

12 November 2004
Against this new snow
the darting squirrel looks as big as a fox.
Grey = black = red.
The colors have gone south for winter.
Or west into the rock.
I am in fact the river Nile.

12 November 2004
Despair, or something like it,
something close to being far,
a now not yet.

Listen,
she told me again, there is nothing
left for you to hear.

A parcel concealed
under a hedge. Containing what?
Something alive
the way anything is.

Light time, horses,
four of them on a snowy field.
They are mine now because I saw them,

they belong already to what I know.

12 November 2004
Doing it every day is doing it right.
Now it is just like the grey pen with turquoise ink
I had when I was twelve or so.
How could I forget the year,
I lived through all of it
with a book in front of me, and snow,
and peach gum sticky on my fingertips.

12 November 2004