novF2004

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Recommended Citation
http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/876
This clay pot was never fired,  
the river never left its source.

My father led me to a spring  
in the rock, I filled my hands and drank.

I have been looking for it ever since.  
Every mountain. Every flank.

14 November 2004
Look closely at me
I think I am the one you want,
at least the one you mean.

Me with my foot in your door
my suitcase full of encyclopedia
on your doorstep. Me, me, me.

I am the deal you can’t resist,
the moon you can’t keep out
with your paper Wal-Mart shades.

I peer in all the time,
I imitate the grain of wood,
become the door, become the floor,

I am the way by which you
come to know the place you are.
I am all wheels and triangles,

pyramids and red onions,
sponges to used to wipe up wine last night
you’re still drunk from today

or is it me. I am the sound
of your voice saying No, no, no.
I live inside your mouth.

14 November 2004
Camilla, you are a crane.  
I have known this for several weeks.  

Do not ignore me. This  
is a Sacred Resemblance.  

When one finds one’s bird  
things fall into place  

the way a bird fits into the sky.  
I am a crow. As you know.  

14 November 2004
In the barrel of our “Birth of Venus” ballpoint the mysteriously thoughtful lady so well concealed by her nakedness stands still while Sandro Botticelli as a blue signature floats up and down slow in the clear viscous gunk of novelty pens.

Only the name moves. Her name is not written, though she is surely Anadyomene, standing on the lower half of Tridacna gigas or no, not a clam, it is a scallop shell,

a sign that Venus also is a pilgrim in this dry world of ours, always brings her ocean with her, makes us wet. Her sign is sudden water. Joyous Lake. The silly little craftsmen hops up and down exalted and depressed by what he’s made.

15 November 2004
FLATBED HAULING GENERATORS

There was or will be a spotlight night. Late sun on the gloss of well-brushed hair as a girl snailshells her backpack along under the mountain towards J.C.Penney.

Forget rapture. A book is in the mail to every house no one will ever read. It is a bible of earth’s own religion –I believe in wood, in water, and in steam–

no one will read, mountains shimmer at the purple time of day, a Hummer grazes in the Best Buy parking lot, electricity rinsing out of the air.

And a gull goes over. I know this bird, he has blessed me more than once before, shadow of the cross shadow of a gull soaring soft between the kill and sleep,

ankle of the day. But still I’ll write it and by putting it into language will deliver it automatically to every English-speaking house, and you too will wake up and find it has come under the door and lies on the carpet spread open beside the breakfast table urgent, it needs you, forgettable as milk.

15 November 2004, Kingston
MERCY

Mercy. Years in his eyes.
He was crying, even
so suddenly. What did it know
in him that made the tears,

the years, those gleaming
automata begin to roll?
And mercy for what?

Who did he ask to spare him?
Was he asking anything of anyone at all?
Maybe there was just this word
‘mercy’ that made its way to his mouth
without passing through his heart or mind,

just a word on its way alone.
As if somebody else
was talking to somebody else
but using this man’s mouth.
And made him cry.

15 November 2004
Some again. Come back.
Near enough to try.
But why?
The late thing,
the opera past its expiration date
still yammers in his head.

Not far away some knight on some white horse
jabs at some Dragon with his lance –
o sweet young man
your metaphor’s transparent.
The captive maiden is herself the Dragon,
your lance is your lance,
when you win you lose.

A dragon is what you need to leave alone.

And if that’s what dragons are,
what do you suppose an opera is?
A Mighty Fortress is Our God
and then the dancing girls come on
skating through the filmy Paris air
while armies rest their arms and watch.

Soon it is over. Lots of people
seem to have died. Others,
apparently alive, have left the stage.
You see them later getting into cabs,
lighting cigarettes, fondling rosary beads.
The things people do.

As far as you can determine, nothing ever really ends. It’s up to you to find the frontiers between one thing and the next. Phases, you think. To be alive at all has boundaries. Or live without them and give yourself a break – while cars are snarled in traffic people talk undisturbed.

15 November 2004
Imagine a different morning,  
one the bird understood less well  
and you more thoroughly.

It would have lines in it  
for you to follow  
and little rooms where you can sit down  
to catch your breath or cry  
and wait  
for the avenue to get to the street  
for the corner to start singing for a change  
in all those voices  
only other people have  
and the bird knew hardly anything of this,  
serene in its own anticipation  
of a bird-form afternoon  
and then the glossy night for both of you  
soon to come,  
genderless and passionate and free.

16 November 2004
Am I still waiting for *anything*?
Anything got here long ago and went to sleep, 
woke up and left again
while it was looking out some window
into the park where the animals are.
They have a different name for it here
but it is satisfied with his own
which all today has been *it hears them roar*.

16 November 2004
After reading a Questionnaire

“Do you consider yourself a religious person?”

What do you suppose? I’m a poet, I write liturgies. Liturgy is *laou erga*, work of or for the people work for their tongues to tell, their hearts to feel. Leitourgia. Liturgy. What else have I been doing all these years?

16 November 2004
I am with you now
watching the dead walk

I love their feet in shoes

some of them are Jews
so I love them best
like my mother and my wife

this town walks all over me

I am literal because a shadow

a shadow is literal

duck walk

*Sefer Yetzira*
the ancient Book of Formation
from which our qabbalah comes

all these people come from there too
they all are Jews
everyone is carrying a secret
you help me decode –

*Write a poem*
you seem to say
*then you’ll understand*
sitting around hell in your pajamas
innocent as Wodehouse

they all are coming
for every two feet we count one secret
the Middle Pillar

the bilateral symmetry of the Perfect Man
who is a woman

and the secrets are coming towards us fast
and going by

you can’t count on them to stand and stay,
can’t say Sit, be a good dog of a citizen,
be a fish and swim through
this amazing early morning rush hour light
swelling down through the eastern windows
that had been sealed up for fifty years

you never saw them opened

this light is new

The light is you
you tell me,
it’s up to you
just write it down
these words will make dead people rise and walk!

But won’t they just be zombies, Robert?

I have gone into the sanctuary of God
with bare feet,
the stone and the tiles I stand on
tell me different things I must believe,
I must believe everything I’m told,
where else would human history be?

stone says No one made me, I just am
tile says A man made me, in Portugal
        a hundred years ago and made me blue
        I lie here so you can walk

I walk while the light lets me

and then the tunnel debouches into the concourse
and the light is made of wrought iron
and the iron is on fire

the dead are firmly back to life
light knifes through them

this knife gives life

I see her face at last
hidden in brightness

they have been hurrying to work a hundred years.

16 November 2004
IN THE QUIET ROOM

1. Air gets into the system causing steam to rise in the pipes making a sound like music or someone pounding on the door. Causing the inspector to neglect the escalator permitting the arrival of a fatal dog the check lost in the mail the balcony on fire

    and still she stands signaling to her lover by flapping the red Bukhara carpet.

2. It catches the sun as it furls and unfurls it’s only a couple of feet long when he sees it he will know he must come to her soon, this very night, disguised as a wolf.

3. Here is the wolf. He brings his own door, sets it up between them so he can break through, he seizes her with his rapt and learnèd paws, cries out O Fox my Fox and carries her outside in the manner of a bridegroom hauling his bride
the whole world is the bridal chamber
into which he carries her, armful of honeymoon,
old ivy dithering in the open window
because the children of such love breathe indeed
but they know and use a different kind of air.

16 November 2004
Hopson
1.

By task, a basket.
Full of reeds.

To include something in itself
takes care.

It is as big as Saint-Sulpice,
it stands around
to impersonate a crowd.

Diesels at 2 a.m.
and then a plane.

Imagine going anywhere!
Imagine not always being here!
How strange ‘here’ must be if one can go away from it.
Locusts eating wheat in Idaho I saw.
Hotlands of the ungitaring west.

We were almost close enough to know
but then a flag went up instead of the moon
and the Pleiades were plainly visible. Indians
called them The Basket of Seeds.

Planted language long ago. Grew up to bring us
strange horizons aglow with senseless light.
Sourceless light. No tree, no star.

16 November 2004
DAY OF OSIRIS

This year Wednesday. Hermosiris. Who knows everything because he’s dead.

What little there is to know the dead do it.

And then forget and come back east again to live with us.

*But they come east from the east—only the dead and the gods know how to do that.*

Today is the day of the death of Osiris.

*And the girl cutting my hair in the mall said We have a god of that name too where I come from. Where is that? Vermont, she said, the Northeast Kingdom. I’ve been there, it’s flat, flat as Quebec but I didn’t see any gods there though. We don’t keep them in churches, they’re little, but mighty strong, we keep them in our cellars, our pockets, our laps. Some look like spindles and some look like old medicine bottles clear glass almost green, some look like branches of trees, or shells, and one looks like a dried-up tangerine. What does Osiris look like?*
I’m not supposed to tell, but he is black,
tall for his age, and very wise.
I’d like to see your gods some time.
Come up any autumn, I’ll tell you who to call.

*

Because they’re everywhere
and no way not to feel
their quiet power never shouting

always hear their conversation—
the gods never stop talking in your head
if you listen,

hevod, your head
is what the old books call the West
n Dwat, the dead house across the river

the Nile between the living and the dead
is the same water between me and thee
only the gods know how to cross it

I touch your hip you take my hand.

*

Go west
they said
into the voices
in your head

keep crossing the river
the one that is always flowing
from your right to your left  
and you go on  
always needs to be crossed  
especially today  
when the sirens hurry up the lonely highway  
and god only know what emergency is on now  
and in the ivy birds bang at my window  
and it keeps saying in my head Osiris Osiris.

17 November 2004
Interesting that this skillful window showed the rain coming down and I see you. I see you.

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