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SACRILEGE

The herm outside the house
has its nose and genital knocked off.
It’s Alcibiades again,
spurning what he cannot rule.
We have no flags to piss on,
so we have herms. Columns
with faces and tarses.
He went from house to house
defacing. Spoiling the fecundity
of city wit and city merchandise.
He hurt us in our market,
in our symbolism, in the easy
transfer of affect from man to man,
seller to buyer, fetish
to worshipper. He hurt us
in our dreams. He hurt the alphabet.

17 December 2004
Close to belaboring the point
a kind of energy, a glad why-not?

yanked out of the stocking
full of strange scriptures and funny candy

like a Cappadocian stone chimney
(you can tell where I’m not from).

Santa Claus is a Sufi
conspiracy, these Turks

always giving things away
as to the Greeks and Genoese

they gave *deniz,*
the whole sea.

2.
Christmas makes me doubt the whole megillah—
only civility, quiet and green tea

are worth all this war.
Imagine a Crusade for Silence,

soundless armies marching through all-day night
with black ribbons worn upon their eyes!

I converted early to my native language,
the Thirty-nine Articles, April thunder,
my mother’s birthday same as Fourier’s,
ever needed any road but her own,

she followed the silence.
But it takes me so many words to get there,

hence Santa, Sufi, Satan, Christmas list,
the bells of Germelshausen drowsing through the mist.

3.
How many roads can you write on one rock?
One day every year it rises,

out of the lake the green copper steeples come
dripping with pickerel weed, eels in the sky,

the soaking cobbles reek in sunlight
and we go stumbling into sudden taverns

and fall in love with the handsome daughter
of the brewer or the baker

we will not see again
perhaps in all our lives.

Who knows which one of us will last the year
till this peculiar village surfaces again

summoned out of some other kind of being,
Xenophanes’s *ápeiron* perhaps,

limitless, formless, evervasting,
summoned up by Santa’s bell
or the Salvation Navy, my shoes are wet,
and it’s not snowing, roomy boots

for all our feet, come read my Scham
that just came out, now will I be able
to afford a sailor so Tristan and Isolde
can lie back on the rigging

and not worry how many miles to Christmas.
Give everything away and all the rest to me.

17 December 2004
JESUS SPEAKS TO THE WANDERING JEW

1.

You’re the only one who understood.
We are travelers, that’s all.
Our best instruction is: to be gone.
Shake off the dust of the town.

We leave each other constantly.
No temple, no sacred mountain,
archive, museum, Vatican. Just
people trying to think their way out.

2.

I said: Wander till I come
find you again. But I will never come
back. Always only ahead.

You are the only one who knew me,
knew where I was to be found, never, forever,
nowhere, and found me there,
mist in the trees and surf pounding at night
but no ocean by morning.
I climbed a tree

and you hurried to join me
on some street
where perpendiculars meet.
3.

Hurry is part of it. For me too. I can’t get there till you come too. You are the one I came down to see, talk to just one minute, flee.

You and only you. Meet, touch, tell, let go. Mostly let go. That is what I mean.

4.

Now when men see you in Adrianople they say “You look no older than when their father saw you in Odessa.” And when men see me in Donegal or Chicago they say “We don’t know you at all. Anybody who looks like you must have gone away long ago, you have no business with our solid lives. You are a shadow. We don’t know you.”

5.

Maybe we do need a new religion where two men meet and join and part linked forever by their little time together then go their separate ways. Like the arms of a cross. Like a cross.
6.

Maybe that is what always means: they go all ways.

We are gone from each other into the now.

7.

We had our own strange little story: you saw me, you spoke whatever came into your head, I heard, I spoke, you heard and we are forever. Like Shams-i-Tabrizi and Rumi or Po Ya the lutenist and his friend Chung–

when Chung Tzu-chi died
Po never played again.
He smashed his lute.

Sign of the rotted fruit, apple or pear, soft sweet, really gone, we put in a friend’s hand,

leave it to him to throw away.
This beautiful wasted opportunity. God is a broken lute. Hurry till we come.

18 December 2004
Talking on the telephone
a little disappointed come
closer.  *Evening star.*
This house is full of spooks—
circuits, wiring, signals,
noise, ceremonies. Gossip
on the telephone.

Chemicals.
The shadows are full of furniture,
chemicals in the water goblets,
drain.  The cup heals
but the poison kills.  Symbols
thick around her head like hair.
Her hair.  Drain the music
from the harp, then break the harp.

Silence is the sweetest chemical.
Let me see more movies,
let the faces fall into the frame.
*Fill the frame.* Your shadow
keeps talking to me.

18 December 2004
Holding a séance feels
like holding fingers.
In the dark not sure
how many hands are here,
how big the circle is.
The silence.
The special kind of silence
when everybody’s trying so hard
to be quiet, a silence
that is made of breath,
hold breath, hold hands,
let a breath now and then slip out
like a word, a whisper.
In the dark there is waiting
and no word.
These fingers that I feel are cold
in my left hand warm in my right
I can’t seem to remember
who they belong to
these hands beside me
and all the others beside them
as far as it goes and goes
or how big the circle is,
don’t know, know
just hands on the table
and a hard silence.
So many people (how many people?)
and just two to touch me
you on the left and you
on the right or are you even there,
is it just one person sitting
facing me in the dark,
why does it matter how many,
one or many, old philosophy,
a man in the dark.

All I am is hands holding.
Am I even waiting?
Then the voice begins we’re not waiting for –
I hear it as words in my head, blue jay at the feeder
here, what kind of voice, birds are always
in a hurry, only people know how to really sleep,

what are my fingers saying now?
Do you hear it too? I want to ask
but I’m afraid to bruise the silence,
red headed woodpecker, war is coming,
we all hear what we need to hear,
pirate treasure buried in your lap,
something for each of us. Each of me.
How many am I, listening in the dark?

19 December 2004
If I were positive that you are you
all the time, even
when you’re silent,

you even in my dreams
then I would be a farmer of this earth again,
an Abraham, god in my gut.

19 December 2004
Parable of the Pearl.
Pearl of great price.
Where do pearls come from?
India. Specifically south India.
Dravidian roots of our culture,
of the transcendent light
that wisdom’s made from.
They have been telling is the source
(by this parable) for at least
two thousand years:
where the Aryans found it,
and what they found.
Not the metaphor, the actual.
The pearl.

19 December 2004
She makes me sad
he said. Her beauty
diminishes my day.

So he turned away,
became a woodman
estimating trees

and felling them, rough,
reliable, something
he could bring home.

19 December 2004
[Dream – a lecturer speaking in a room, I’m in the back row, he says
this verbatim, then I wake.]

Everyone in this room
once or twice in your life
didn’t just sit down
in what was given

but chose another thing
a bird or a belief
and entered into that–
and you were.

20 December 2004
7:53 AM
Feeling about feeling
and who is doing it –
and who is thinking
if this is feeling?

20 December 2004
Not feeling good about a friendship –
the discrepancies between what we are asked
to give and what we are given
will haunt us later.

Give everything or lose.

Every inequality is an inequity.
And every one
will be paid back.

But what about devotion?
Will that too have its recompense?

That is the world’s hope,
that the lover’s yearning
spills out of the hopeless relationship
and sloshes all over the bright emptiness of the world
where in the sudden wet
you, he, can see for an instant
glistening the outline of God.

20 December 2004
An old romantic.
Four apples on an oval platter.
One of them enough to sin a world,
two of them barely enough for me.

20 December 2004
a church
is a building

it is stone or wood
it stands
in for heaven
or a righteous earth

god is whatever
happens to you in it

the place makes the mind

wherefore our mystics call god *maqom*, the place.

As long as they built Ely
it does not matter what they believed
or how they felt about the doing

they made a place.
This little chapel the only Vatican.

20 December 2004
(from a note of several weeks back)
PURUSASUKTA

the human
four finger-widths
wider than the world

that which is human
the human thing itself
sticks out of the system

macranthropos,

the self larger than what sums it.

20 December 2004