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THE LANGUAGE OF EDEN

Self hysteria
self is hysteria
his story
that is what you find out
in the darkened room
of so many recitations
crepuscule of the word
Achilles listening to the ocean
o make this water mine
and no woman ever
walked the hallways of his dreams
my hand on the telephone
waiting for the word
so many heroines
stretched out to judgment
caress the curve

Nihil is the resistant
not the nothing but the not defined
it is all pervasive
it is what we try to shape or shatter
with assertion
making meaning where before
was only the pure

the pure voice
you hear it walking in the woods
saying everything and specifying nothing
nihil

I love to hear herself talk
if I cannot be the father
I’ll be his daughter
resist him all my days on earth
o mais les nuits the wells
from which we gulp such water
pure without judgment

to lick
I only drink at night
to ease my throat
from so much day’s coursing
the talking cure for the feeling sickness

we visited the country before the war

all our riverbeds were dry
and water had a strange voice
among the shiny pebbles
we lived on the Damascus road
sometimes rain would wash the stones away
and make the clay a sticky road no car could pass
that summer he was dying in London

my mother said she could hear the water’s Russian
and I knew only I had no language
I wouldn’t speak to anyone
they’d try to make me

but all I wanted
was to see the porcupine
climb up the pine tree the rattlesnake
lie sleepy in the morning sun
the deer gaze at me from the woodlot’s edge
when you see an animal it means you’re thinking

all summer I was thinking
and not a word I had to say
I watched the thermometer go up and down

rigid interpretation
sailing ships and steamers plunging
smokestacks like the valves of trumpets
holy trinity going far away
does music ever come back
but when an animal looks at you it means you’re wrong
men with breast fetishes want to be children
men with buttock fetishes want to be women
men with genital fetishes want to be men

sometimes the bird can’t tolerate
eerie smell of the closets
where the winter coats have talked too long

sometimes a coat never comes home
no names please
whose coat hung a whole life long in whose closet?
ever came home

just say a lady
or another
my brother touched me there
(pointing) and I resolved
to explore the ruined chapel

the old dry fountain
looked as if the sunlight broke it
not even lizards lived there
the roused sensation
and then the water came again
I bent to drink

but our resolutions
do not last the first week of the year
week means a turning
month means moon
what do years mean
yare means nimble
yore means being long gone ago
your means my desire
why don’t I know what the little word says

it says what you almost remember
what the girl did in your dream
do you remember telling me
I wrote it down a long time ago
but I do not dream
it dreamed me \( es \, träunte \, mir \)

or on my way another spoke
there is no end to this going in

you mean there is no in
beyond this door
no room in the in
every child heard that in church
but still we pry the door open
pray it opens
wedge our littlest body firm inside
but you’ve made mistakes too
haven’t you, fallen asleep
while some poor heart
descanted on its grief
you too have awakened with anxiety
wondering what the patient said
wondering what you missed

and gone to bed with terror
am I alone in this bed

have I lived beyond my body
have I outlived my soul
when you say that what word comes to mind
a Kleenex used once and let fall

Freud is the name of believing
you have a right to be
that things have a right to mean
that your life has a shape
and you can know it

you can go there
where the living is

how can I know
how can I even make my hand
do not do
what I want it to
my brother made a big issue how I couldn’t whistle
I never really learned how I can’t even now
but I do everything else

but do you ever drink the golden shadow
the later it is the more I want
and how did that make you feel about music

what music,
music is a pretty street that goes nowhere

twenty years of paychecks have done wonders for my disposition
but you don’t outlive neurosis, understand
it changes its targets and its tunes
and in the novelty of that variety
you suppose yourself improved

but there are doctors hiding in the least of things
medicinal Balm in any random lap
because you don’t have to believe you just have to remember

memory is the fertile lie that makes the future grow
stop touching me
especially there
I don’t want to know what it feels like
I don’t want to know how I feel
the bread on the table is soft and white
food is such an absent-minded friend
never finishes its consolation
a certain man left weltering at the side of the road
I need to look that word up
weltering, Pilgrim’s Progress, stern god,
it has welt in it
which means a wound or bruise in English
but means a world in German

do you come often to this bus stop by the lake
you can see the Bavarian shore across the way
may I touch you now
where the fur falls back from the nape of your neck
o don’t touch me there I feel too much
we come for the summer only
I have no affection for skiing
there is so much contingency already in my life
in all our lives
sliding on my bottom down the slope
yet isn’t risk an element of pleasure
maybe it’s the only pleasure
plaisir d’amour and all that slop

isn’t it important to distinguish risk from pain
I didn’t want to hurt her I wanted to hear her say Hurt me
there is a difference
there are rowboats approaching from the west

why do you interrupt yourself to tell me that
I don’t know where we are
sun glare west bank of the Nile necropolis
this is the subway of the dead
I can’t hardly hear a word you say
there is such roaring in the tunnel
people say it is the trains that make the rumble
I say it is the thousands of the dead
hurrying on their way
to where they go, they want me with them,
I hear their stormy voices, sometimes I hear my name
pronounced in their strange accent
o doctor the terrible dialect of the dead

I think you speak it
I think you’re speaking it now
you want to kill me doctor
to stuff me into your necropolis
like all the bric a brac on Freud’s sideboard

museum of other people’s lives

I’m sorry I don’t mean to be such a bitch
I don’t know why I say the things I do
why I see
the things I see
and saying
I say as much as the rose will bear

Do you think everyone is supposed to listen to your story
where do you think they’ll get the patience to hear you
that’s what my husband used to say
do you think I should care about everything you tell me
isn’t it my business to forget what you so painfully remember

each of us has his job to do
yes I know you are a woman
entitled to a pronoun of your own

even though I’m listening I’m not sure you’re talking
and you don’t, you smoke and eat lozenges and mints
while I’m trying to talk
I’m trying to tell you the heart of me
and you eat peppermint

are you really trying, though, why does it matter to you,
do you think, that I smoke

smoking is doing something different from me
smoking is saving some part of your mind for you
I want all of your mind when I’m with you
I’m paying for it
stop fingering that Egyptian figurine too
it makes me uneasy

it’s called shawabti, it’s made of blue faience
what else makes you uneasy

touching, so much touching
I never said that even if you say I did
let’s not get into a dance of denial

I love denial
it lets me live
it lets me love

they put them in the tomb
with the dead man
so the figurine could do the work
the dead man could not do
but needed to have done
on his way to the wherever
he was going, little blue men
to work for him

blue men at the bottom of the dream
there was a light at the bottom of the well
where a woman opportuned me
she was naked and she was old
then she was young and fire
was coming out of her hand
I went down until I woke
am I with her now and you
only seem to be you, you
with your mustache and cigars
you are too I think

isn’t everyone a woman really
isn’t everybody my mother

I can’t believe you’re not listening to me
you’re fingering that stupid Chinese figurine
and I’m trying to tell you
it’s so hard

are you hard now listening to me
not listening
are you staring at my thighs
what do your fingers think
while they fiddle with that thing
are they thinking of me
do you want to touch me
the way they did
they used to listen carefully to me
it’s true they never gave me good advice
they wanted me right where I was
where I am
where they can get me
keep me in reach
keep me in my misery
so that I reach out to them
to make them touch me

touch me

are you some sort of broker of enlightenment
why don’t you tell me what you really think of me

which one of us is speaking

don’t answer it don’t answer it
I don’t think it’s right to let the phone ring
the phone sound is someone else taking you away from me
am I just a cloth you put in bleach
to take my meaning out
so I could just be anybody
and you say Sorrow be gone

sorrow be out
the way we used to talk before the war

before the fall
Javel water, pale bleach in gallon flasks
saltpeter hospital
breathless surgeries of one time ago
I have lost my own history
trying to please you

anamnesis
trying to remember
trying to remember too much
the crowded tram that ran down to the beach
in my country
we wade far out then turn around
and the land we had come from seemed a shallow place
misty and low, it was hard to remember
there was a city there
and we lived there not far
hidden in the visual distance
all we see is all we mind
while the sand ran out between our toes

who would be there with you, your brother
sometimes I came alone
the sea gulls made me happy
one day a gull was hurt or wounded at my feet
and I felt it was my fault
though I had done nothing
just looked down and seen it there
twitching softly
maybe responsibility begins with what we see

I tried to pick it up or something
and it pecked my hand
it hurt and I remembered
my mother how she would heat a needle
and stick it under my skin
to work a splinter out I had
the bird made me bleed
but I wouldn’t let it go
I brought it up and nestled it in a clump of sea grass

did you feel it was like your child
why are you talking about children
don’t you know that upsets me
are you just trying to make me an ordinary person
well-adjusted mother of

tell me about what your children would be like if you had children
I never will I never will
but if you did
you never let me finish about the gull
and now our time is up
usually I mind it when you say that
but I’m glad not to talk about children
you’re really fixated on my having them why
not on your having them just what you think about them

but the divan’s empty now
I always want to know who cleans his office
his invisible wife his illegal immigrant au pair

I imagine her sitting in his chair in the dark
the stretching out along the patient’s couch
where she has no right
no right but the dark
maybe she masturbates there at midnight
fantasizing all the weird narratives soaked into the leather
leather is so cold
maybe she turns the lights on
and stares at the special ceiling
she wonders does he choose
each crack and stipple on the ceiling paint
his patients have to look at

maybe she should write a word up there
softly with her fingertip in dust
a word they won’t be really sure they see
a word that will distract them all through the analytic hour
but will teach them something, what,
console them, yes,
but she can never think what the word should be

1 October 2002
arcs of sameness
an idea not an experience
but can’t I feel you thinking me
what do you do alone in the night
when your wife sleeps at your side
peaceful as a South Pacific isle
unDrake’d by discovery?

why think of Drake now
strange word that means a dragon or a duck
as if everybody is just like me
afraid of every living thing
the terrifying sparrows in the dust

but do you really feel me ever
when you are thinking
am I just an hour in your week
like church or not like that
are you devious enough to be holy
do other people steal from you
of course the famous ashtray
when you’re tired do you sometimes
forget which one of us is speaking

when I wake up
there’s always an invader at the door
I had a dream a long time ago
old dreams are they still valid
came again and again it scared me
I called it The Occupation of the House
there’d be a knock on the door I’d open
and someone would be there and come right in
and never leave and never leave
what can I do
to make them go

you’ll have to tell me who it is
who comes in when you open
what kind of person comes through your door

if you look very hard to really can
read a word on the ceiling
what does it say?
I’m still trying but I think you have
words written, hidden written, all over the place
to test me or control me

every wall and furniture
begins to talk
and there is nothing left for me to do
but sit there sullen reading them
and never alone

isn’t it stupid I come here so many times a month
and sit here with you
to be alone
I have to pay a man to sit with me
to be alone
and then the hour’s up, you throw me out
so I can’t even be alone that way
I have to be out there with the crazies
the other crazy people
I only want to be alone with you
it fucking sounds like some dumb fucking song
doctor
learnèd one father of wisdom
butcher of my soul
you filet me so neatly
in Scotland they call a butcher a flesher
did you know that
you take my flesh away and turn it into talk
you make me talk
instead of being healthy in my body

god damn it I am meat

there’s always a camera working in my head
that shows me me
sometimes when I’m with you it stops
marry me doctor marry me we don’t have to fuck
just stay with me
sty with me stable with me
let me be your animal
let me stay here forever
reading the word
I see your eyebrows write
shadow by shadow
on the wall of your face
why don’t you ever tell me what you feel?

I go no further on this path
can go no
this path Maghada
do you understand
where the Buddha was
that’s what I think
any little pathway through the woods
is where he went once
and now again
whenever I get really confused I think of him
there is a way
to go through all this natural
these trees this loving
this loving this wanting

to get to the other side of love

are you my little path?
is that what you think he did?

I think he did something I think he got somewhere
I need to follow
it cheers me up to think about it
the going in
through sunlight dappling the jungle trees

what does jungle mean to you

I mean I’m caught in my life
what can I do
but follow the footsteps that brought me here
keep going or stand still

maybe when I come to see you I stand still

I stand on the path and look ahead
you can’t see much ahead in the jungle
the path is always turning
I see the light coming down
and the darkness waiting to interrupt it

sleep with it
the darkness wants to fuck me
I can’t keep going
but sometimes I think of him going before me

every time
what somebody really does once
eventually everybody can do

alone or together

it’s waiting so long
I can’t go on any more this road
and yet because someone else went all the way

did he?
what does it mean to go all the way?
where did he get to?

all the way to no end

do you hear what I’m saying are you listening to me
when I listen to myself
I hear myself saying things I won’t understand for years

I mean I say the truth of what is coming
I mean I say more than I know

and you, you say less than you know
that’s the difference
as if I pay you for your silence
doctor your fees are hush money

why are you saying that to me right now?

because I can’t go on
I can’t
every road is wrong
this stupid analysis these stupid questions your dumb Ikea furniture
give me a break
everything I do is wrong
and I don’t want to go on being wrong
I don’t want to go on

do you hear me when I

are you threatening?

I’m threatening myself god damn it
can’t you tell the difference
you’re the one who’s supposed to be clear about boundaries
which is you and which is me

I wanted to ask you a question
what does it mean in old books and movies
when they tie a broom to the mast of a ship
on the crow’s nest above the sails
in my country they don’t have that custom
or I don’t know it, it must meaning something
what do you think it means?

broom could be a woman
they always used to call ships she but
why a broom maybe it’s the old word besom
looks like bosom
does it mean a wife’s aboard

what would you mean if you put up a broom?
maybe I surrender
maybe my house is dirty
come clean me out
spit and polish and elbow grease
but flies come through the window

what do you feel then?
I feel invaded, weird people
fly around my room
they bring diseases polio and leprosy

are you afraid of them?
they make me uneasy
I have to chase them out or
kill them I hate them I hate to kill them
anything
come clean me out

I have always tried to help you
why do you think you thought of the broom today
the broom on the ship
I need your help
is it because there is a woman on board you
a woman you want me to help you clean out
do you think this woman is a part of you?

some people carve letters in their skin
initials of the one who doesn’t love them right
initials of the departed lover
I don’t have any letters on my arm
it just seems crazy to do that
but I feel as if I have them
I mean there are names written so deep in me
I’m shocked when I pass a mirror
to see their names are not written on my skin
shocked to see that I’m still me
and not them, the ones I think about
all the time, I can read them where they live inside,
maybe some day I’ll turn into them

what do the names have to do with how you feel
do you sit at night mouthing their names
instead of calling them on the telephone or knocking on their doors