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THE LACEMAKERS

Stroke the mark
and strike obeisances
where they simper
grovelling to every tree or
male confusion; do
not abrogate your lace.

Toothwork of archeo-machine.
Slowing going blind for eighty years
the women of that other place,
my mother every one of them.
This hand I art.

Sanctuary. Even Sunday morning
the little jet or crystal rosary meek
barely clicking in the dappled hand
in swoons of Blessed Mother consciousness
until the Mass is finished
and the sunlight is,
brief again, outside and her dead child.

. . . .

Bird cry and going through with.
Not a great deal of animal
to lumber through a yard. The slow
grind of Tiger baseball pleased my mind,
of weight and age like Dark Age palaces
all mass and shadow — ache of chapel,
dank baptistry, line drive, long of beard.
All night we watched. We won.
A number changed in light — a satisfaction —
so in the desert of our lives
some grains of sand shift across a visionary line.

1 August 1994



the archer the intimate



Ten tastes to know the side of the mouth in
nine starts to a star
eight struts to a landing
seven stippled by the rain & green: oak leaves all-resistant
six toggles to turn me on
five orchestras to tune you
four alpenstocks to hike a cliff
three ratchets to advance your cause
two shirts to share
one noon to notice & be us

I will be purple if you stem.

1 August 1994

ELEMENTS MORE THAN SUPPOSED

As if underneath the practical veneer that keeps the milk out
the sprucewood of your dinette table is waiting for the high command
of all that is matterly to decide: it is all right for the table
to drink milk. It is permitted for things to mean whatever they like
to us and we to them. Doorbells have an archaic flavor now—
no one comes. The footsteps on the porch belong to ghosts
tired of waiting for us under the wind-warped pine over Yaquina.
Why do we make everything wait? Why have we driven so far
to get away from pleasures we embraced in California? Oregon?
And who was the car? Carrot shaped things dangle in a neuter wind.

2 August 1994

Inkstain my artifice. Grow kindly where you can
leaf upon door sill, moss on roof shingle till
the old lych gate by the graveyard's covered deep to make
an underworld in sunlight and we guess where we go.

I know you and your friends suppose that moss
has nothing more to tell us, and death is just decor.
But I live these bones. Time is my decay
and argues volubly with all of us, that old man on a park bench

who won't let you get away. Be responsible to the wind,
noise, spaces in your head, the inner weather.
Not emotions, those acquired constructs, but the root
feel of things inside you, silk or milk or running water. Or wind.

Begin with the feel of wind between your skull and your sense.
What empathy we ask of one another with these little marks
(words, theories, measures) and so little with our own condition,
the feel of space inside our spaces, the indoor rain, the private night.

2 August 1994

Tool for what is needed (a day to keep silence)
we are together in the tiny hope—but that's
too big—I have to walk full faithful into dawn
past all the incaminentos of West Third Street,
centripetal babes with their sallow moods
hugging themselves as if the sight of them would kill,
did kill me, entertainment our severe disease
from which so few are spared, the merry plague.
And I'm not just talking time-waste and morality—
I mean the moon has set in that glisten and no sun comes.
I mean there's nothing but the glisten where the skin once was
—in love with personages we can never touch, Elvis alive
and living in my shoe, a sense of presence peddled
to people who once upon a time are here. Go
where others have seen his shadow too. Misspell the wise.

3 August 1994

MOUNTAIN

Is everybody back yet from Ladakh from Ispahan from green places
Where a red mind's made? Is everybody purple? In the shale
Of Mohonk, in the moss on shale, and ferns, and bright orange
mushrooms

Growing through the moss, in the lake wind nuzzling at the little boat,
In the nine-inch slender black fish two barechested brawny rich men
Caught between them, in the squealing struggle for its life in sun,
In the two dawn-spotted fairy yearling fauns we saw at peace
On stilt legs at evening, listening to everything we had to say,
Safe in the peace of listening, and in the coarse collapsed white
Huge lilies corpse lilies of datura growing among meek pink
begonias,

In shaggy gazebos and the hope of heaven, what did I hear?
I heard a man walking on the mountain. I saw his broad feet
Skirt mud puddles and step firm on rock fall, I saw him go.
What do I know? I know he has gone before us and beside us
Three thousand years, and that's just since lunch. Each thing we see
Is not a thing. Or as a thing all meek and actual it speaks & is a guide.
A guide moves among the guides like breath through the alphabet
Saying and blessing and making clear what kind of glacier left us
here.

4 August 1994

ON THE DAY 11-DEATH

A day to measure the skull
a day of ink. An owl or a hawk
—who are you? —
swooped between our doors.

Rain spatter in hot sun haze.
Can I call you yet?
You are pigeon. Axle. You are angle.
You made the geometry I just bend.
I want to tie light to the tree

(a tree is upside down)

and make it breed with shadow
and from that savage union come
a race of artful wounds to wake the mind.
Two dozen finches sound like that
around a little seed.

Then tied to the light
the shade submits to my caress—
we belong to being seen, we are
but are dependent.

No free lunch in America, a ball of twine
rolls big across the desert,
Ariadne rolling up the world.
The evidence (o Christ! the sweet evidence!)
is swept away. Even the rocks shimmer
unstable with becoming.

It is alive but you can't
predict, can only love it.
Whatever else it is the skull is hard,
one bone among so many friends.

4 August 1994

Tired of these mistakes—
a rose trellis a net of shadows he trips over
yet again the paltry identity he sensed inside and all those others
act as if he were really there. Mosquitoes bite. A discomfort arises
from misunderstanding, two protein systems ill at ease, a self claiming
sovereignty over all its skin, a little stupid war. He scratches his
 ankle,
the insect dies or flies. This brief awareness of our common life is
 gone,
where do they go, the ones that touch us once? O careless love
that made the world so large. Or now your plangent heart
 accelerates—
this is the hour before breakfast. There is no weather.
There are no feelings yet.

5 August 1994

A SIGNATURE

Be me. Be me in your night time
tying you to your bed.
Untying your dead.
There is nothing
silk or leather here
there is going.

Rain walks.
Let the precious differences
fall, there
where there is nothing
but leaves we don't have to eat.

5 August 1994

Raging almost, as if responsibility
led him to this bone beside his road,
he found a song. Not derived from *sangita*
(*sam+gita*) in Sanskrit. Not coming
but just lying there, a bone.

Bones are never there before. Ever
abstract from some familiar
opportunity, one that could love you,
animal. A bone, a telephone.
Evidence of a palpable design.

But does that love you? Does that
eat ice cream all the way up Laurel
wondering if that itch on the waist
is a tick and if so of what kind? What kind
is anything? I keep asking,

like an Old Slavonic liturgy, the repetitions
are musical, wearying, sacred.
Hear me, I caterwaul. You also are a mouth,
the itch is spreading. There is a bland
inevidence around my skin

called clothes or holy mist or something
wrong with the transmission.
Your hard disk has fleas. Your sunglasses
don't work on the moon. Help me,
I have been trying to touch you all my life

and all you ever are is my life.
You can't even hear me, having no
ears except mine. Even your bones
are common. This bundle of them
held loosely, towards you, my hand.

6 August 1994

NOISES OFF

The cicadas or some chirruping recollection
silenced in the cold night.

Something

comes to me there.

It is an owl cry or a woman passing
in a car filled with radios and a man sleeping.

Everything in her control. The liberties
were a place where night was exemplary
for interactive opportunities. A dullard like me
could hope for no quarter there,

thrust and borrow, song and liturgy
of compound lust. Be anything.
Just be. I walk my way
and they walk with me, the friends, the sequences.
Like stars or bishops or blue cats

stalking out of the rain with a man in their mouths.
Long ago I got all the sizes wrong.
But this is pleasure, this is the noxious
fume of appetite that smiles my skin.
Nobody likes somebody who likes everybody.
That is my glory, the narrow yen. The happy few.

6 August 1994

HOLDING ONWARD

ask **animated** energy to hold
a poem
not together but going

the way a body poised motionless in doorways
is strong with going,

hold it to one road
not coherence (it must be moving)

a road but a single road.

6 August 1994

FROM AN EARLY 21ST CENTURY TEXTBOOK

There is nothing more modern than the moon.
Prove it. A country is made up of lakes,
a marriage of reactions, a boat of resin,
a book of pleas. A rock is certainly mysterious—
there is no reason it should be so hard,
everything is going somewhere all the time.

Even if I'm not in France this summer, we
feel the evening breezes move. Waft. Weft.
Butterfly. Name me: I sit deep in your constitution
like make-up on a model's cleavage. Serene,
incompetent, ever true. I'm wild about you.

Can't you give me more to go on? Cool evening evening
go out to dinner, never wear a hat? Getting warmer.
Are you milk? Or cream? Or Cadillac? A smut of soot
fallen in winter on a soft pale cheek? A chasm?
Nearest to a chasm. Is that an answer or a fruit
or your location? I live there. It is rare and real,
it happens now. I think I know you,
your eyes are heavy and your hands are light.

Questions for Discussion:

1. How many voices are to be heard in this poem? How many appear to embody the feelings of the author?
2. What kind of person would think that things had the constituents mentioned in lines 2 -4? Are you such a person?
3. Why shouldn't hard things (line 6) go places?
4. In line 7, where is the speaker in fact? Is the imagery in the poem (before this? After this?) clues to his (her) identity?
5. Things seem to be in or on other things a lot in this poem (See lines 11, 15-17). What has this to do with the final image in the poem? Does that image resolve anything? What?
6. Who says "I think I know you," and what does she (he) mean? Who are you?

7 AUGUST 1994

THE HOLY SACRIFICE

Asgard they taught us to say it where the
gods lived at least the gods they taught us to praise
and left to Friday the other gods the ones
we needed to meet in the singleness of dream
where I could kiss the limbs of the least of them
and she was more powerful than any Day.

Why don't they teach us these things? Why don't they tell
about The Other Gods, the ones that love us
with intricate maneuvers and the dark?
Is it they want us to learn them ourselves in the street
like sex and music and poetry, the smartass answers
that wreck our lives, but give us a life to wreck,

wreck, offer to *them*, the uncanny beauty of them
as she saunters in anybody's clothes through the slip
of moonlight I guessed from the constellation Leo
to be seen outside my house last night, the actual,
I saw before bedtime and then saw nothing more?

8 August 1994

THE GARDEN ASIDE THE HOLY TOWN

I might have been an impostor too.
To speak is generous
but silence gives.

So much of life is waiting
for the water to boil
and how soon the coffee gets cold
he said,

 bakers
lost in their dozens,
the moon blind-siding us
then shrinking back.

It is dark of her now,
no answer. *Der besetzte
Mond*, I called alas, the wine
pinkled in the golden stirrup when
a chevalier in haughtiness
rode through the bride's
kitchen — marry me
is more than meaning—

an opera
(uproar) for an hour,
wild bee stings of sun
through shallow curtains,
kiss me.

 Long afternoon of lick.

I called but the moon was busy
—interval and paraphrase—
so that: the drunk rode into the saloon,
was reminding me of how it was to ride
into sunset Corbenic at last,
something large in something suddenly made small,
the grail nearby, a girl laughing
nearby out of sight

and every order of inference
cast aside, and just this touch
my whole philosophy.

Nothing buzzing in the quiet
but sacred pervasion,
It in Everything a-sudden,
barflies falling off their stools
and suddenly the gold was there,
a shimmer walking through the garden
where there should be no light,

a shimmer in near woods
the shape was nothing
but light but light
was walking,
the three students saw it,
held their ground and shivered,
kept asking questions of the leaves.

Tell me what happened in this place.
It all is here.
The grail is everywhen you mind.

9 August 1994

T A G E S F R A G E

A day is queer.
Everything fits
inside a day.
Why *does* K
have a sore
ride on her bike
to what *is* work?

Of course everything.
Become a question
if you want to please
with sinuous
(serious) intent.
Of course everything
becomes. A crow quill
on the lawn, a tall
priest at compline
robing and a word said green.

They lay a road.
Birds consume.
Our business is answering
in strict time strictly
a smile and *ohne Weiteres*.

Each thing
has drunk the juices
of each other.
The siege of opposites
is a blue season.
Who wins?
Maybe wind does.
Birds on the roof.
The habit of being.

10 August 1994

My print, my fanciful leaf shadows.
How the sky articulates.

Brother water, have you changed your sex?
So many queens
of so little territory, a man's frail heart,
are you one, a queen, after all, carasoyn
or undinë, wave person, key made for every lock, the contour
found?

And once found, caressed in each detail
until the door bursts into speech?

The door of water.
Syllogism, water's bones,
a dog is barking, a clunk of garnet sitting on the desk, be easy.
A calm comes.
Far away, on bicycles (*travel wheels* they call them in that land)
people coast along a shallow sea.

This delicate dance
depends on
but does not need
me. The paradox, the oars
of a dory swung behind the yacht
clatter in the empty hull of it,
a sound like breakfast.

Ambient alertness saves.
Raise a flag
charged with her qualities
(a red key on a yellow field)
and still not be sure.
So much water even in the least of you.

10 August 1994

