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Aubade

*... you are the music
While the music lasts*
– T.S. Eliot, ‘The Dry Salvages’

Come near, let me
sense you, in this human
way we have – for now
and not forever.

You, the skein of busyness
in the bush air, all arousal,
all heat – you: the ant, the beetle,
and the blue-banded bee.

Love, the shape-shifter,
is on the move
again: starry, her neural
and her chemical mess,

her dawning nakedness:
a blessing for anatomists
of what it is we are,
and why it is we feel like this:

love’s ache a lovely quarry
to be quarried in the body,
where once we hunted
common sense, morality, the soul.

But come: for we are dancing
to the same song, you and I –
a world within your bodies,
and I a world in mine –

and both of us desiring,
and both of us in time.

I

... childhood is certainly greater than reality.
– Gaston Bachelard

Letter to My Daughters

If I did not love you as you needed,
bring me back to change the script.
I'll re-write the dirty puddles
I deleted with a frown
and you can jump in them
in white until we sing a mud song:
bring me back to change the script.

Because you needed all my time
to break the sap from every tree,
bring me back to change the script.
There were some we could have gone to –
there were many we have missed.
Autumn made me anxious.
Bring me back to change the script.

If you wanted one last story,
bring me back to change the script.
Give me time, and I will stay with you
until our eyes have shut. We will climb
the giant beanstalk with its land above
the earth. There is far more than I knew then.
Let me put it in the script.

Take your children to the ocean.
Bring me back to change the script.
Don't allow them to be troubled
by a mother yelling caution
in the roaring of the wind.
Let the joys of ocean deafen them.
I want to change the script.

*But we cannot find the script –
perhaps it went out with the junk.*
All the letters in my drawers –
you didn't know that was our future
I had written in your hands. My loves,
if you are listening – I am writing us again.

Mother to Child

I dreamed you babbled in fragments, words all tangled,
as if the trees of language
were saplings still uncertain of their roots.

Then I dreamed you described to me the nature of being,
so precisely, delicately,
your breath and mine exulted at having shared such words.

Following a dream in which you painted on your palms,
making print after print
as if listening to desires born millennia ago,

I dreamed you began to paint the ceiling of our house.
Every stroke erased the roof.
Every mark opened gaily on the universe of stars.

I dreamed your expressions figured love, jealousy and rage,
but not as yet the murmurings
of longing and regret.

Then I dreamed that you came to me with drawings of a forest,
familiar yet unplaceable, and whispered you were homesick
and would I take you home.

Poem for a Little Girl

Once you were pregnant with the thought of her:
the warmth of the sun on your arms was her,
the pulse of a bird before your eyes was her.

And one day she appeared, where she was not before.
A bright seed; then suddenly, limbs, head, heart,
for life itself was curious to know who she would be.

Birth gave her to your arms, your eyes.
Light and air were mild. All of those who love
understand the way time moves in a daze of love.

But how her hands urged her to hold! Her legs, to run!
Language flew into her ear and she could speak!
Sun and wind were her friends. So you held her in her sleep.

And you held her small body when she stumbled into night:
for days the black river went plunging into night.
But in the place you've come to, there is only care.

She has woken, your love, in the house of your heart.
Oh, now she is laughing, saying Look! Ma! Pa!
I'm a bird – I'm sunlight – I am everywhere you are.

The Blind Minotaur

Pablo Picasso, Vollard Suite, plate 97

Night's the ground beneath my feet
since I learned to walk with you.
Scented guide with birds and flowers on your breath,

it's no earth, but a sea we walk across.
These sailors, pulling out from shore,
delivered our desertion.

In this new life of mine,
my heart keeps coming on
its every old error, grassed over

as if natural convexities,
the quickly earthed parts of who I am,
underground until the brass of a song

blew in a resurrection mood.
I'd have eaten you alive, girl,
had you come to me trembling around the spiral wall,

dust closing on your fingertips: and then.
Now your eyes are my dominion,
which your feet traverse directly,

and your fingers are the chords that stagger me.

Reading the Greek Myths

You are seething; I am worried.
We have read the Greek myths.

This anger of yours feels like
a distant thunderclap

without the startle of light,
yellow leaves dropping

from a well-tended plant,
or – judging by how often

we have chased the night scouts
from the peaches –

an army in the house,
and with what plans

I cannot tell.
You know the Trojan story well.

All were the playthings
of the gods.

Let's look for other joys
to replace the one that's gone.

We'll send the golden apple back
before there's damage done.

The gods can find
another game to play.

Circadia

I

Each morning, a thermometer held beneath my tongue.

From day to day,
the constellation of a graph
tracking numbers from *what was* to *what will be*.

Watch for months and the body blooms boldly in Circadia,
realm of mechanisms.

Heating or cooling as though it were a star, an oven stoked
or aired
by atoms in their coupling
and uncoupling, all the fusions that are brokered

and undone, in every cell, such recognitions and
relinquishments.

Many days pass without a message
from a friend when one's awaited – nothing short of death

suspends our chemistry. But what so magnifies the trope
that we read our hearts' temperature
from infinite gradations of expression and tension

in the mercury of gifts?

II

Light across the sand beneath the water, water's weight
across our backs, a pure inversion
or reversion to original type, though not the sheer
unmotored flight

you said you dreamed of:
lifted by a few loose-tied balloons.

Morning in the rising bubble of the piscine world, in which
suspension is the rule:
half a sky below, and half above.

The emperor's attendants heckling for a place in retinue.
Shadows swinging over
quick as shock and as amorphous as a cloud, they are us,

we are a form of atmosphere.
Between sleep and wakefulness, this, the otherwise world,

arranges our expulsion.