

THE AUTONOMOUS SHE

Selected Poems

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AUTONOMOUS FORCE/ BRIGHT DAY

Washing oranges in the sink
two sliced open for you
star-lines and cells
Stack the drainer full of them
and a touch of tart green limes

You are smiling talk about
a baby that waved and smiled at you
when you were at the window in your robe

gone now standing all curves globes
your white bottom both breasts
crinkling on the ends
though the sun warm today

The hollowed line pointing to your warm fur
a gesture of your arm

We are making coffee the foam
of waves huge in the sun
the power submerged in my belly
breaks against these coasts

golden green day you are smiling

the earth turns in moon's orbit

Seeing you this way these hands
spontaneously touch my *Muladhara*
and *Sudarshana-chakra*

it is love
and love's murder

CONFLUENCE

and even my touches
have grown musclebound and hard
have their way

how we lay
beside the fire then were naked
and the most loving hold gave pain

that's not it I will bruise you
even reaching to pick a seedtuft
from your hair purple
your temple most subtly

my weight presses you
with a violence on deeper bones
than those your body closes on me

but now your face
goes entirely out of thought
some loosened thing falls
far down and back petals
of a velvet-black flower fold
some perfect assurance

and I see you smile for this

as though you are happy
split open by this humming
carpenter with calloused hands

to be turned this way and that
to have scrolls gouged out
and stained-glass windows fit

ADAM BY CHANCE

found himself
by a small stream in a place
he had not known a boulder
warm beside the water surge of sun

Insect's insistence and birds
just accompanying an urge of his
so his seed fell into the pool
drops he watched in clear water
loop into misty pearl circles
and settle on the roots of an oak tree

Years before fire had struck it
and opened a door at its base
the tree grew an ornate scroll
around the arch and made ready

This door for the girl
who grew in the trunk of the tree
sleeping until her breasts tilted
and her hair netted around them
her legs grown long eyes
deepened in darkness all
flowered in the tree's earth smell.

On the full moon she crept
out the dark passage
and raised her silver arms.

Now the man had built a house
down the valley with another woman
all on another arrangement
even god ignorant of what had passed.

Once when Adam walked alone.
beside a tree-ringed pool
he believed he saw something
like a nude girl sitting high up
in the crotch of a tree.

The wild man ran to look
everywhere at once
Finally he sat on a rock
and let his shoulders droop
in silence fixed his eyes
on something indistinct. Then
her eyes
reached into him hands
scooped around some lost animal

CRADLE OF STONE AND AIR

Great green toad
of a rock, ragged lichen-
splashed and black, warted
with older stones in quartz

I am perched on him perched
on a house-sized boulder
above where we built fire
two weeks ago, where
like a kite on a string
I would reel us close
in honest talk,
lazy after eggs and beer.

Perhaps I am too thorough
imagining too much lost,
too much what the love was

Your eruption like this stone
lumped of older parts, some
new coloring, and to crumble
Or last quietly for centuries

in this size of time

and ancient mountains
I know myself an ordinary man,
unable to change
the shape of what I find

here, feeling my skin stretch
thin like an aging man
in today's sun falling through
thin air

DANCE

the poem turns its skirt
opens and widens

and sometimes flows
down like a breast
from its own gracefulness

A deer makes a circle
for her own reasons
looks at you with a curved neck

Tracks in deep snow around the tree:
missing bark and branches show
she ate them

The hunger: the gesture

its center a candle in a room
in a place silvered with living
we made seven sculptures

each an apostolate of silence
"reincarnation after the love-dance"

Bring the pieces, set them around

ah, I like to be the place I am
love, all the things our people are doing

mornings they join hands, moving
first gold lights their foreheads and then
and then

Praxinoscopic they dance
with silver eyes

END OF A SEASON

I slept until ten
and am pulled awake
watching a fly
running figure 8's down
my room with great speed
repeating
as if pylons guide it

something to do with the wind
that came last night
unmistakably winter enough
to kill all outdoor flies

2:00 AM when the snow came
I was reading Himalayan
wisdoms. The stones are tired.

Had breakfast after that
can't look forward to
breakfast: I lie and
watch the fly

wonder how it would be

to see her today
think about the cold air
that drives senses to a point

FOR YOUR BIRTHDAY

we have been
where the land went out
slowly from the arroyo
and then swept away

alone in
that silent world

clothes thrown
on the pinion's branches
flagging the sun down

we have been
when the wind outside
blows color from trees
just as it comes on
whorls of dust
drifted leaves

we move
through the last three days
you move to thirty

we move
through an old land,
thin air the only resistance

FURIOUS CLOUDS POUR GENTLY OVER THE SACRED MOUNTAIN

--for Kathy

1.

The ocean tides the highest
against the wall,
foams across the walk, we
walk out in the morning sun
carrying wine and sausage and eggs singing
the smooth curve of ocean turning
the muscled water in morning sun

2.

In your *sabi* grace
bends a stem of goldplume grass
the wind blows mountain pinetops
clouds above us in a harped roar
rush in where they are eaten
the wind/dance echoes across this valley,
we rise dizzy
You again, "I get it from the wind"

3.

We sleep on the mountainside

spread to the sun,
try our magic on deer
beside the gnarled cosmic tree
we find new strawberries coming
under the opening of oak leaves
in their first grey fur

4.

Find five kinds of flowers
before we pick the yellow ones for your hair

there a lizard, the mole-run soft underfoot
the thrush beside you begs
your giddy-imp smile

TEA AND ORANGES

--For Marlene

melon sweetness, i
inundate myself, you are
flowing silver

it leads to the pure
spring everything
unspoken

you shut your eyes
breathe light
your arms a cradle

your eyes talk, you say
"have your way"

motion the sun
to come through us
we shine with honey

the old barren hills,
they lighten and burst

in their stone slow avalanche

THE WHITE WITCH

I clap my hands four times
counting slowly the wind
carries it away to the south/
west toward the rising sun

The rocks resemble themselves
from before this dance
turning motionless
in the applauding sun

In front of me a valley
where you are I can't see
it is full of the heaviest
of this bright air
it wants a water of gold
to wash through

A dragonfly monitors
how quartz boulders
journey to arroyo sand
where we fell asleep

in a quail run windchannel
star course funnel for water

and morning sun

Quails cry suddenly
like a hike of young boys
discovering us in the desert
wake us in sun avalanche
flow down mountain

sky-pressed wanting water
I am bathed in sweet
sheen your dewed breasts

you roll up the sleeping bag
In the sand your feet
sparkle yes in the night

you witched the mountain's
lava rock to writhe
witched me a lizard's
hallucinated morning eye

THE ROOM

A woman I loved
wanted to rent the cabin
way up on Sandia Mountain
with adobe floors
polished with animal blood
in the old way

She and the woman who owned the place
fought about something trivial
their agreement forfeit

except we had already made love
in the room

**MAGICAL MARE DESIRE SHALL NEVER
DIE OUT OF THE MIND**

--for Kirk

Your black dog would work ever evil, ah
through both eyes you see into his head:
 a spinning center, cosmos worked
from darkness to that small sun

spokes seven rays, nerve fibers
 and threads of sperm

Pleasure preceded by the idea of pleasure
 "fire is born
 from the genitals of woman"

(agh, do what you want)
 eager praise
 magical rage

I also fear the dying out of appetite
 running its tongue into every form:

Under knees and loins,
muscles pulsing
imperceptible with her seven hearts,

the mare cruises w/out a bridle
at freeway speeds

MORPHOGENESIS, LOVE

I have for you
frightful green words
this white season

snow on the hills
snow on the power pylons
snow on the
snow on the wind
coats the undersides of
crows

snow belonging to winter
has the weight of spring

colors of fall went crystal
anticipating
another thing

now dark lines
form at the edges
of February's high snow

could winter doubt itself?
white drifts shudder

soggy
green

indiscriminate
burning

froggy
spring

OUTSIDE, SOMETIMES

Night, and Orion cleared
by the Wind blowing
on and off for two days
and two nights

The doors don't keep it out
or walls the sound

Her father has died,
my father-in-law once

Winds that blow outside
us! I still love her
think of her in a plane
her mind in order
her feelings a fine balance

Sometimes I am lonely
The Wind comes down
into oak groves
we say it "rises and falls"
among the leaves
And the frogs
who spend time

either thinking or singing
sound clear between gusts

An old man stops by sometimes
because he likes frogsong

Tonight centers a turning
around Orion
end of a daughter's cycle
start of Fall winds

PERFORMANCE

I have laid a stone wall.
Found flat rocks weighing 300 pounds
and laid them carefully as mosaic

and tonight
lift the bearskin from beside the fire
his eyes false, mouth made to smile
a clown with scarlet

Put it on my head, and dance
for the woman who crouches
and watches from a darker place

Strength holds in his shoulders
made of air, falling from
his great crown of bone. Dip and dance

put it on my head, and dance
for the woman who crouches
I dip for the woman
the teeth arcing

PAIRS AND OPPOSITES

the dove
beaks into the throat
of turtledove
thrust and throttle

she fluffs
he is on her

now his nervous head
small for his body
darts

with her bill
she lays feathers back
her tail
her breast

the yellow eye
of the blackbird
fixed on them

your neck arches
like a raven
and very white

they preen
two feet apart
she creeps
into pine needles

under the shower we lather
against one another

your flecked eyes
hang on me you had
shut your eyes and
smiled

SHE

A rearing of rocks
the bigger the farther they go

She wants
the other side

A heart of light pulses
on the scrub and
tangle and

a crowd
telling her she can't
walk up there

far night
She doesn't know the way

stepping away
She follows a path
She sees

THAT WOMAN, FORESEEING DANGER, INCULCATED FEAR

These night-whispered orders
are for another hero this woman
threatened and brutally torn from him
whispers that the dark forgets

*The well-spring, sacred vessel:
You are 18 feet tall, beautiful in
white robes that would glow in the dark.*

*The abyss, dark vacuum:
You are a hairy demonic fish
with teeth of long knives.*

Can I go in there and take a stand
in a heroic way

*(La off, Babayaga, he sd,
or i'm rammin this hot poker
up yr witch-mother ass*

*I wasn't doin a thing, she sd,
not any more you bet*

But our arms are withered by a secret

memory, 0
she promises a golden oiled pheasant to eat
the gift of a path through tall grass
sun-tinted white flowers

Must be a way to the living princess
but the woman distinctly has spoken
of faithlessness, and

There is a hoax here
That is a head on my banquet plate
There is a blood on the festival grass

THE CEREMONIAL POINT

Points of ice at the start
May's first rain swept down
lightening gift of water
& silence after lightning

our narrowing below loins
makes a flight of arrows
& strange spring thunder follows

Or arms & hands you knot
up over my shoulders we escape
from some cave & blind Cyclops

& now we are pure
abstract points of light &

still you are dark hair &

skin glistening
the clear quartz arrowhead
I find in the morning

washed on rain-black earth

THE PLACE

we are on the mountainside
in the fair whiteface of the moon
all my shades standing

wearing one face
I stumble around

you open a door
vista to mountain distances

in song
walk through with me

the door disappears
 you leave me
 to choose a way

THE WAY

We climb onto a great wheel
of brown wood
with crossed beams

another wheel inside

carved with embossed
leaves around the rim

*Complete the inner circle
one for each of us she says*

The ground far below
I have no rope no ladder
no tool for all this magic

Here is trying to get back
the way the light changed
when arcs closed on a center
with no circumference--

From this platform of
intricate carved celebration

I lower you with both arms
drop you gently
you go away

THE RETURN

Huge hands of bone move through the night;
the great moose return and at dawn
the largest clubs his head at the cottonwood
tree

People compare pictures of christmas
reindeers
and other things they know and shake their
heads

He clubs his toothy antlers on the limbs
and waits for somebody to come out of the
houses

Dark shapes move in first light looking
for the girl who will mate with them

Black haunches hunch in slow motion
beside the creek under dark trees

THE TREASURE

The shelter of branches and colt's-foot
has indeed fallen down, rotting in rain,
the small stream dirty with new water

After our many joinings here
the stars swell with your prophecy,
you give birth to a song that disappears
Do places hold us?

wild strawberries still ripen
small bursts sweet on the tongue

I give you a curled ram's horn
You give me a burr seed-pod

I give you a cape of green
You give me a ring of daisy

Now the sorrel deer we heard trumpet for a
mate
the night the moon moved so quickly down
moves out with your grace and fearless
pulls leaves from a bush beside you

His power is his perfect ease you
walk out on the same ground, and
a second deer more golden than the first
comes out of the trees
three lives make some centerless ring,

and above you there are two moons
This is your insistence; who must you
convince?
there are two moons, one going to meet

a round moon, mirror of insouciance,

there are three moons

TODAY MY TIMING'S OFF AND

--for Tam

Today my timing's off and
I keep missing you
It's your birthday and
I can't even give a kiss
like I smiled to think of and

last night I was confused
a knight on a bony horse
camped a day's ride outside
the palace

Should I have shouted
I love you from out there
or wait for your surprise
that I arrive clanking
I remember today?

And now my timing's off!
I leave an absurd kiss
on the doorknob of your house.

I kiss your hand I remember
Stefan saying that in a foreign language

and how he bent down
about as low as a latch

it is a gesture left over
how a peasant greets his lady

TONIGHT

the keepers of dreamtime allowed
field and flower

*That miracle again, you
let me inside your body gently*

the memory in my body singing
you back moving under me
without care about the music

your eyes closed cannot speak it
the small-smile glint of teeth cannot

the ductile mind grieves, harassed
by the shadows of what it cannot hold:
candlelight under wood beams
your damp long hair

GILLIAN IN MOTION

you strip
yourself
for the ocean

i believe
in your trembling

those bare
shoulder blades
of belief

body
a long bare
turning

jade pebbles
washed up
the white beach

the curve
of your stomach

WHAT SHAPE OF FIRE AND FRUIT

You come into
my private mania for intensity
in a mandala of return or recovery
of fire or fruit after exile

How the braid comes out, the fallen hair
it's in all the dreams—
Where is that field of flowers, now
"I'm odd and full of love"

He came to find her
they left together
these were iridescent pigeons
flying one wing in common

SPYING ON HER

Through the lace-filtered bedroom window
she sits half-dressed on the bed and is still

It's full moon tonight and she seems to pray
while studying a circular calendar

When next I look a lift of sheets shadows
and settles on her undressed body

Arms over her head fluff pillows lift breasts.
The book she raises will take her to the
Congo

Dwight Eisenhower he of the Kansas grin
and "What me worry?" ears has Partice
Lumumba
hacked to death. Would you rather a
machete
so you hear your flying chin land across the
room
could watch yourself bleed to death

or be pulverized humming in line at the

coffee bar
9/11? "I'd just like mine natural, thank you."

Before I get another look her light's out she
sleeps
my lady sleeps she sleeps my lady sleeps

the moon on her my lady sleeps and dreams
she
moans

Then whispers to something small
she holds
in clasped hands

ONE MORNING

Because of the cold
I put both blankets
from the small beds
on one of them

When I came to sleep
at first
only the sound of her
breathing
breathing beside me now

Her hair loose
her eyes shut
what is the ceaseless mind
seeing and doing
inside itself

Now
the moon is slim a train
whistles over the snow the clock
puts its futile rivets
the train-sound a grey live dove
her breathing mine
the dark the light

STUDY OF A WOMAN WITH LIGHT

If we smelled with her sense now
we could almost be fed
with that heavy ardor

of grass-smell
but it is a field of wheat
hip-high and still

green

the kernels on their stiffening ribs
milk inside soft skin
ovum good to eat or to drink
the tongue can press it out
these small eggs with sweet yolk
in a field entirely feminine

a field open to possible form

How is it that
she runs such a singular way?
her breasts rise and fall gracefully
as her knees

Behind her
the light bends from turned heads
darker green where she has passed
a banner at the tip of a green arrow
driven so directly

what is she
when she bursts out
rupturing the folliculate field

CELLO

Your body carries this visible world's
spectrum and invisible past vibrating
alive in you back to the big bang

particles of light drift from your body
the molten core of constellations glow
behind your visage I caught a glimpse

did you know my dear with bluegreen eyes
you left a crack to see through
when you shifted embodiments?

what does the seeming silent Orion send
to color the sound of this world's traffic?

what does this gold string play
on the pillow where you lay
so fine as I lift its curl of song
it disappears into light

as did I last night
when you settled your gold cello
over me and quivered

THE MUSE

but finally you didn't hunker
and piss in the water

 "The Spring of the Muses"
your double moons flashing
in the dark aside
the poetic mix

couldn't pass the chance to sleep
beside the cold spring,
 such a funky name
ants in the bedroll

waked up ahead of goat-herd bells
that come right on where we slept
your chaste head on my arm talking
talking
 they come on
 trailing goat-turds

*

throw the head back
let it float to the moon coming
over olympus
Shout motherwater

into the hot Mediterranean
i come
legs tumbling
backward in a menstruum sac

voluptuous water
voluptuous mountain
voluptuous moon

salt smell green sea

SHE IS DANCING

She is dancing
that filmy white robe her hair fallen
her head thrown back

Flowers that were ready to bloom
open and close in her mind

O lady
this flower as long as you care for it

She stands
shyly, her white gown moves
in the eucalyptus-sounding wind
her dark head bent

*

Woman folded in a tree trunk,
curve of deer neck, snow queen

you rise from the sonorous water
whose depths are covered with men
who rode down the zodiac on whales

who signed up on that expeditionary
believing they were headed
to Central America to collect
gold lashes from the sun's eye

O lady, a harvest
after the waiting, the deliberate
gathering of tools, the girding

after waiting I am ready
the harvest is ready
the moment we step into the field

GETTING LOST

*I have never been lost,
but I will admit to being confused for several weeks.*

Danial Boone

the last thing we say to each other
before we go off at night
into dreamtime

“See you in the forest.”

I love you

gratitudes

see you
in the forest