WHERE THE ORDERS ARE

-original poems

by

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We accept this thesis as conforming to the
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abstract

despite personal & general chaos, there is order. where values, intentions, and conditions lack order, (such is the 'human condition'), order is everywhere evident in the physical world. & here is the connection man seeks to make: to relate to the larger order--for he is part of that larger physical order. count by numbers, measure--as all the universe does of itself--ritual order in all things.

to wit: the language can only take us so far. it does not admit to such clear order. so how can it render such order, nevermind try to impose it.

the poem seeks the orders, and the connections. they are real and to be found. what the poem ultimately does is point--indicate where the orders are.

(to which we do adhere, in spite of ourselves--else we are not part of the physical world around us.)

but there is a pun in all this. orders. as in holy orders, a ritual to be discharged in the service of. in no way does the poet make or impose. he discovers and reveals, such is the function implicit in his ordination.
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daily / I enact myself

text: in Pirandello's *Henry IV*, the gesture is the man. his pretense at historical reality becomes reality, or the reality pretense. in either case, the gesture is the man. the form he takes expresses him, and who is to say it isn't so.

the form he finds to live in is there in the gesture.

the sexual gesture is equivalent to the poetic gesture

I do not claim that the world is centered here in me. nor do I create it by my existence. perception is discovery, not creation.

but I enact myself. each movement is an expression of me, rather than an extension.

in no Platonic sense do I discover a world behind, in shadowy paradigms of the 'hidden reality'. it is discovering other expressions of the tangible world that interests me.

thus metaphor is a valid means of considering expressions of the thing itself.

the sea moves in such a way that it is a ritual, an enactment of certain sea-rites. that expression of the sea is real metaphor, as poet is metaphor for me. as david is metaphor.

dancing is no simple extension of me. it is a patterned movement of my body and its beating. and so with the poem: one means of me being me. in the poem, I gesture towards myself, in hopes of discovery, perception.

I can live in the form of it.
notes for a dancer

(in for j b

in its own service
his body flowers
from its roots

turns petals
to sun & moon.

not mimicry, ritual
a rooted gesture
of the whole body

a dance complete
in a finger's movement
or a pelvis turning
against a body.

a dancing ground is what he wants:

a place to be flowering
in a rooted gesture of flesh.

arms & legs, eyes
turn to the sun
at its going down
or rising, dance
to moon
in all quarters.

the touch of his hand
upon flesh is loving
the softness of body
in dancing.

the sun
has warmed me,
him too

& the music is always playing
in the streets of my day,
of my memory.
a distance gained

the wind and sea and failing lights
all drift across an ending day.

body alone.

wanting another
subtle body
to swim with.

summer of 1959
we swam together
naked in the black sea
1/2 mile from the point
under pinetrees, over greyblack rocks

which we celebrate now
hand upon body
in the night.

since that summer, a between time:
where love encloses us as beings
coming distinct as direction.

I have come such a distance. (the eye walks
in the cool of gardens
marking boundaries)

boundaries: where love can be so many angels
in the streets of my memory

not asking more. I have come
such a distance.

now is it body to body?

I give tribute to the hours
the days and the body

where the sea is only an escape
I constantly return to.

the memory continues.
there is nothing else.

a gesture of love
is still a true wonder.
"Why a tender curb upon the youthful burning boy?"

i

now I see a body burning
young & fair, the boy
in flames that touch me
a touch that bruises
burns the flesh.

a burning form, the fire
that in its form delights.

he delights in his walking
his movements, turning--

what utterly untouchable
beauty in his bearing!

a walk upon the grass
is patterned by his form
in movement.

I feel his burning
in my turning
after him.

ii

I walk among angelic brilliant bodies
who shine a dark smile over eyes.

the child
whose body is
forged in the flames
is more than his body

is a fiery form,
angel to my eyes.
iii (the opening: a way in)

brown grass black root
for the dead foots fall
to walk upon a passing time
in memory of my body.

hands upturned or down
across face or leg
in memory of my body.

to the occasion rise spring stems
of a dozen phallic flowers
that might have been grown
in a younger garden

but the memory of angels
is with me, in vague
memory of my body.

: a coming to some senses.

iv

the children who have stayed latest;
angels to their twentieth year

are restlessly around me. they
do not know this, nor themselves
as angels in the bright of day.

patterned, they dance
upon the grass, feet
to turn their
coming and going.

(always will you love angels
& find them dying in your arms"

so in a dark eye or turn of head,
my cold uncertain fear.
a frightened tribute

a dark angelic flower
warm in its own flesh

you are

smiling in wonder
at yourself.

when I name you child
it is for your body,
for the vital darkness
of your flowering under me
in dreams.

can you feel the swelling
& the smell of sex
about me?

I fear those eyes
that turn to me

for darkness falls
from all the air
between us.

I fear them/fear the tale
that my eyes tell.
the rites

myth he said
is involvement in the rites
of the universe.

the moon in all its phases
tides & planets, orbits
stars (suns in other
systems) burning

:all expanding, moving
in ritual order.

He placed them
star by star
in the night sky

signs in the night
of Taurus, Orion
or Virgo, all signs.

Aquarius the water-bearer
placed among the starry signs
in memory of beauty.

Ganymedes bore his cup
before the gods
in grace & beauty
to the greater pleasure of Zeus

who loved him,
took him to his bed
& loved him

placed him in the stars
for love.

you told me that story
& played your guitar

spoke of Narcissus
at his foolish pool
to find ourselves laughing
in each others eyes.
in response to your poems

(to hf
new jersey

i

the line of a leaf
with sun upon it
turning in the wind

is not a sign
of human
frailty

(tho it is fragile
& turns as the wind does.

the leaf
is the leaf forget me not,
sign of its growth, its place
on the tree, or the page I turn.

ii

the god of all movement that is actual
turns the leaf
as itself.

o Metaphor!
wronged beyond question by like or as--

all false, distortion.

how absolute the name
of the leaf itself.
a leaf on a tree
with sun upon it
tURNS in the wind

as the wheel turns.

do you evoke the fates to turn the leaf
for a poem of dead trees, of dead leaves?

then is the leaf a wheel,
the tree fate?

from my window
trees back up to mountains
cast shadows over tidal pools

& yes the leaves turn
when the wind moves
among them.
letters to gabriel

oct 21

a carved line in stone
goes to the heart,
is direct.

but the carver?

he it is who makes the cut,
breaks or turns the line,
goes into the stone
to pull
himself out.

we are not collectors of words
playing sound games. the name
is important. poet.

(turn
into the heart of love

a going into)

poet: but the cuts we make
go into us
if we are direct,
do not evade
what we know.

argillite was for the haida
stone to work in. the tribe
cut into rock, a myth
hard & clean. tangible.
handwork of a man.
how strange, the evasion
is two-fold. doing
or not doing.

we can refuse the line
our body beats out
for the hurt of it,
or turn it
outside itself
in simile.

both ways,
it is a false cut
and the stone is marred,
the artist is marred.

what we do not reveal
is most ourselves.

the word
inarticulate
the stone
uncut

or a false cut
where the word hides,
cleft into shadow.
Oct 26

a figure cut
into granite, hard
adamantine
:stone.

argillite, from secret lodes,
taken from the earth, is soft.

molded & cut, it dries
to hard obsidian black.

'the line of the poem, onyx, steel'

a line
cut so clean
it stands alone

cleaves :

to the heart.


oct 30

for friendship, poet
I send you a carving.
the island: three variations

i

the extent of this island
end to end
is calculated at 7 miles
width 4

but beyond that
the sense of island
bounded by sea on all turns

where beach is limit
& sky the other

an island, past definition
where stones on the shore
resist the sea

limits
beginnings & ends

island: as isolate
cut-off, bound by ocean

here to discover
where the body leaves off
& the sea begins

I came, braced against remembering
& found instead a source
a place of beginnings

a refuge become a passage
a way into
& out
the mystery of islands to the west
(a place to end
  all things, in sleep
  where the sun sets)
intrigued the greeks

but our western islands
  (where arbutus, twisting itself
    between cliff-trees
    redpaper bark, avocado under
    clutches granite rocks)
are named for the spanish

Saturna
  for Saturnina
a spanish galleon
mythically heaving & plunging its way
north thro the blue Pacific
to find an inland passage

Narvaez the explorer
  from California, circa
  1790, passed thro
  Juan de Fuca Straits
to these first found islands
  sheltered from the roaring sea

not a blaze of white temple
on a still blue ocean

but here
a fire of red bark
between massive rocks

to enclose us
iii

a weekend in october
brought us to this island
to discover the rocks
& both our bodies

spiked fingers of rock
thrust against me
the earth
is bare where we stand
between the trees & the sea

rocks: to hold onto
a handhold, foothold
toes against mud or bark

& now you firmly
support me here

where the tide slaps

beside the rocky
or bark-bound pillars
of this western island
the gift

tinandra was a sacred sound
a word I heard, & then employed
as energy in a poem
to carry it

but that was several years ago.

today
an argillite medallion
bangs my chest.
a talisman, the killer-whale.

(as she said
tinandra is returned to me)

oh I know you will say
my magic words deceive me.
that the magic in a word
or black motif
is only in my mind

but I make poems
& songs with them

I wear them, chant them
in my dreams
& make them real
as they work for me.

a circular medallion

:a gift
to wear around my neck
hard haida symbol
of the killer-whale

who is carried thro many myths.

now he is my sign
as my name is

my fortune sign, my talisman.
the last straw

if that woman stays
I'm not, he thought.

articulation
did not follow.

he said instead
to be here
is not enough.

to which the bitch did not reply.
improvisations from my bath

i

the circumstances of this day
my hair
for the first time in 4 months
cut
are strange.

in my bath
the shorn neck
is smacked by soapy water.

remember
how massive breasts
in paintings by Goya
float and bulge
nudge
the flow of water.

who the hell are we
women of the streets
or duchesses
to bathe this way.
the japanese
would blush (discreetly)
for my neck.

ii

remember always
the flower that grows you
from your mother
is that soapy blossom
of hairy navel
curling.

my navel (long cut)
curls inside itself
or should

not
that I question
the doctor's talent

on that birth day sunny
1942
may
the eighteenth

that I cant remember
anymore
warlock

i

eyes closed, the hands throw seastones, darkgreen seastones to charm my way
rolled up to ends of fingers counted & cast.

(there is a spell I remember in the bones of africa, cast in another poem.
always that gesture back to the sea-- stones that children brought me spilled on the table to spell )

here then is the magic of the real world
in words & the action of rain stones & the ocean, mountains & trees.

the count & cast of them gathers to a memory of the magic world.
each cast is a memory of the magic world

a boundary outlined to be crossed again.

I come into a dream of the real world
to recount to myself rocks trees & rain.
to handle them place them count them is to charm my way.

one by one, the elements unfold.

earth turns
the air is fire
water flows

a continuous flux in the real world discovered daily, every moment in every step this poet takes.
imaginary fragment
circa 1965

    o Sappho! your maidens
    are gentle. their ankles
    ring soft the changes
    in gold Aphrodite.

image

for robert

the moon in all its possible continents
rounds the black of sky

in so full turning, in the world's dream
lacks only the rustle of bamboo leaves
to make it oriental.
fantasy

in a painting called seduction
I would place myself in shadows
smiling serious from the canvas.

before me, bronzed
by an antique glaze,
hair marble-carved

he stands.
his eyes will follow
the movement of mine

& the hand I lift
to bring him to me.

tenuous: the hand extended
holds me. touch
is the beginning

/crisis

the fantasy collapses
with that incredulous face,
that sickened response.

in a painting called seduction
I continually place myself.
thickly, his throat
in dim shadows of black hair
moves against my mouth,
& the sound of his voice goes thro me
caught against his neck.

the scent of this man
is incense to me
as the smell of his sex is

& the weight of it frightens me.

the opulence of form
in the male body

is what holds us here
fixt in each others arms.

he who knows his body
knows mine. the eye
will lead him to me
to be his reflection.

Michelangelo's statue of David
splendid in the Florence sun
is the male of all male love.
in his sculptured form
are all men found
to themselves
or as they find their lovers
in the hot clasp of sex.

who is it I love
or create to love

body to body
in the dark of my passion?

his voice touches springs
at my dark sources

a heavy music
in the thick of his throat
goes thro me.

how can I tell
his smell from mine?
I prithee, gentle maid

she wanted to draw him out.

she wanted to draw him

into herself

& hold him there

braced against remembering

in the warmth of her.

i

in the void in the void

between them, he

wanted to stop

but she clutched him

(hair aflame)

& drew him, burning

to her.

o! softly she consecrates

his genitals

 o scent

of cloves & of pine.

he rose

& came moaning to her.

ii

in dark flames, in passion, how

hold back, how

stand in the face of it

fearful

consumed?

he surged in her body

he surged in her body

he surged in the swell

of the sea.
she took his breath & come from him.
gathered him into her.
caressed him. rejoiced
in his wild comings.

femina omnipotent, she
loved him as herself

cast flames about
& he burnt in the heat of her.

in the void in the void
between them he lay
spent in the sweat
& turmoil of bodies

as she grew, slowly
within him.

took root.
the kind of code we could adhere to

evades us in the darkness
of our daily fears.

nor is there any season
promises spring. the dawn
is bright as twilight. both
lack reason. neither sing
an ancient code-song.

order we need
/to the mind
& legs walking.

nearby, people talk
of the fine distinctions
the mind makes
in the faint light of memory.

but what is there
to remember?

a clutching after bodies
moments of disgust
or sickened fear, of
my first dark sex
by a creek that ran swift hear my home?

dont tell me myth
as if that were any answer.

stories to prove
what?
that men are gods
gods swans

or that we dance perpetual
in a spinning light?

o yes we are dancers
to the song of the stars,
theoold rites incite us...

what order is there in the face
reflecting in water. my face.

none but what I make
and I make none.
our fundamental concern is metaphor.
so we must seek the resemblances,
all correspondences of things
whereby they are expressed.

it goes back to gesture
where metaphor is valid.

in the world's dream of itself
objects move
in fields of misty perception

a litany of the real:

chair table wall tree
house hill hall
all real

cloud earth leaf sea
shroud child water
all real
o real forms

earth air fire water

the elements conspire
to divide themselves among the real

& all is moving
all corresponds
all sings.

the arrangement of consonant & vowel
(by consent of syntax)
& all repetitions, variations

is in motion
is the world I sing
in my own world's dream

of all that is actual.

count the real phases of the moon
which pulls on the tide
to shift all coastlines.

there are seashells on every beach
this moontide touches.
a tribute of sorts

i

the female form
reverts to its opening

breasts are suspended
& shoulders slope
down to the close of legs
which is her opening,
place of all beginnings

while the male
grows out of his close

points heated, quavering
to navel, to chest
to head, that head
both heads erect
in the growing

& a simple distinction of emission:

up the white come of the male
which is his offering

but the female (except
when her child ceases it,
growing of it) has
a downflow of blood
she told me, smiling, that her flow had ceased
and two months had passed
since she last moved red
in a lunar cycle.

her child
already stirred
in my imagination.

for her, he (of course
to be a male) will
have his offering, to be
a boy-child simply.

it is not my child that stirs within her
consuming the diverted flow of her blood
(dumb foetal growth of two months sleeping
and are his dark eyes formed in him yet)

but a child to my imaginings
moves towards form, a body
to please her, a child
to love.
a singing light

i

a singing light is ancient as gold
as rare. the muse
is hard to discover now.

his clarity of vision
comes in shadow & subtle light

/comes seldom.

call him spectre
for he is that elusive.

ii

a voice, direct & simple, said

you have far to go
& I am watching.

that force, so variable to my ear
that feels the impulse

turns me.

iii

o Spectre! I take
my place

there where I have knelt before
an ear for a mouth
to take you
into me.

sing again to me
the songs in your heart.
let them rise
as my sex to my navel does
when I desire

for the years of my youth
love the ancient gold
of your light
& your song.
you gave me song & warning. warm
your hands, your mouth was moist. I regret nothing. I loved you then.

I kneel now as a supplicant begging for the word who heard the sage & gentle warnings
sweet & gentle songs.
a poem in two phases

for Jack Spicer

(one)

I grow tensions. beauty
is not just a word.

near me, they sit in their numbers
& I am teased by the line of them
hair head & feet.

but how hold them?

locked in their smiling assurance
locked against me, they
smile unaware
of the tensions I grow for them.

why is it always
a darkness, a pain
where beauty is concerned?

o the ache to be in them
wholly, & to take them
into me. to be them.

is that it?

why is it
I grow tensions?
(two)

one month later
a chance discussion of alchemy
crucible & lapis
reminds me

the child
whose body is
forged in the flames
is more than his body

is a fiery form,
angel to my eyes.

in his fiery crucible, the adept,
the forger, deftly turns
the ore

but the forging of angels

(white lapis to silver
as moon is female)

in the self
is forgery

(what utterly untouchable
beauty in his bearing)

having passed thro stages of fire
& earth
there is no resolution.

I have come
such a distance.

tension is desire
to return, to possess.
where the orders are
the word became flesh
(& in that flash
the promise of darkness)
i
he had then no words
had feeling had action
from action & feeling
came gesture came dancing
came sound
(translate 'song')
to gesture to feel to move to sound
is chant
;a measure of involvement

anthropologists tell us that man first made tools
and used them, made weapons and used them, before
he could name them, before he could count them.
mind was much later. the word was much later.
to sing with it sound of it dance for it
footfall & murmur
is chant

what gods are these
that he saw that I see
to dance to
to chant to ?
the movement of wind
rain over oceans
fire
the weapons
he killed with
footfall & murmur, a surge of drumbeats, as rough hands batter hollowed resounding logs.

in celebration of a kill, half-ordered articulations

where red blood & his force incite the feet to movement

patterned by the beat of his body

he danced to we chant to .

when the spirit moved him word flashed thro him

a coherence of symbol to count out his gods

& the myth was enlarged in its articulation.

still primary is chant :a measure of involvement :pre-coherence of response

ii

a clear flame in this hell we envision brightly constant in dark eyes night knows no greater darkness than the dark clear flame of hell

black flame burn bright in the sky to catch all turning burning brightness

constantly dark eyes turn to the burning of bodies

which is final deliverance.
to exorcise, to cast out
the body from the dance
is always evasion.

we know no other way
than descent

the descent
(o! how he goes down)
is of the first order
to where the dark roots
of my cry are.

iii

in principio: now he breaks out
finally, to say it

fire!

has it, he names it.

I am intrigued by the movement of fire
the turning of goldred flames

as he must have been

for our god is a god of fire
that burns constant in his eyes
& mine.

strike flint to tinder
to make it

name it
to make it

I see that flame clearly
twisting & turning its fiery point
the heart of it blue

flame consuming matter.

to name it is to make it
& the word consumes the flame.

I am the god that strikes the first fire.
it will not (in the first place)
I assure myself
return
what I thought
or dreamt so often

a beast
whose fell is shadow
without fearful aspect
come as a warning

& I heard: you are wrong
from the start of it.

david is not mystical.
david is just that, a lover
who dreams him a world.

letter to my beast:
to be mystical is all wrong. so what happens when
the ritual of all things is enacted thro the poem,
which is dance itself? how strained can the metaphor
get before it breaks?

right there is the answer. the
metaphor is that real—a definite connection between
2 objects, a pure resemblance that exists prior to
any statement of it. the 2 are in achieved correspondence.

Blake in Jerusalem, book 2
invokes
his ordering spirit

but here
beware the evil Plato
who buggers the guiding spirit
that makes such correspondence.

thus Aristotle: "to make good metaphor
implies an eye
for resemblances"
hubris: the pride in defiance
where the orders are.

a dark art—
the mystery
at the roots of things
is a promise of darkness.

descend
footfall & murmur
to original orders
chanting.

the elements reduced to this one.
fire.

which is burning of bodies
and
turning of points

final deliverance
and
touching of lips

is of first things--

but the simple; the visible
turns to be found here
in all its expressions.