

1976

Axe

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pity we can no more see each other
I remarked guessing its direction

don't whine for your cap it replied
you no longer have the head for it

Cat

I can't see you clearly it is all a lie
but everything is much simpler: taste of water shadow of chair
flight of steps life death

let my word and object meet like two kissing mouths
the cat gnarl-like on that tree-branch
wants a bird not a metaphor

Axe

when the day has peeled away completely we bury its white kernel deep in
the earth stand our bed over it and keep an axe handy to fight any attacker
even in sleep

the iron purrs silently digesting the cool expectation of a blow rubs against
our hands kisses our fingertips swims under the pillow rocks our head slides
down our neck and shoulders touches our hips and thighs gradually shifting
the forces of gravity which imprison us in a factual order of things inter-
laces our hair with parallels twines its helve round the meridians

suddenly we ride the snug horse of sleep kicking its flanks searing its mouth
the horse rears up clears the first obstacle and with a dry crack we are de-
tached from our shadows the taste of metal floods our mouth and we par-
take in the communion of heroes

we are now admiral nelson at trafalgar a simple soldier at verdun st george
swallowing a fiery dragon our hair sings heroically and nobly the raging

horse bites and kicks at mangy clouds a hot visor descends deeper and deeper over eyes our fingers on the helve harden and the axe's bliss becomes so palpable that it fills us like darkness a grotto infests our whole being changes into an iron echo drumming inside heads juggled by a storm

o sweetest of heroisms but for you the hand would decay and the horse plunge into its own hooves

o most blessed of blows but for you neither our skulls nor those of others would have purpose or meaning

we swing the axe into the white stem of day forcing itself through us and putting forth its first quasi-leaves the stem is too delicate to bleed but we will wait for a hundred fierce nights its blood since it is quite possible that we have been hoodwinked here

The Rifle

I speak directly
from the heart
to the brain

if I jam I smash
teeth by order

I've got a head
for knowing the hand

my sight is to the rear
yet I can see ahead

Knife

precise sovereign beauty of the knife's back edge
cool skeleton upon which magnetic flowers climb