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The natter, the policy,
the friendly car—

so many of our persuasion
(dream of me all night
kiss me in the a.m.)

and the body rigged to show the soul at play
at home in our theater of the changes
and hidden in the coulisses
(brown bag over your head,
your hands deep in a box)

liberty!

This island molasses
we believe,
the slow crawl to telos,

we just don't see what's happening,
virtue is a bone
that keeps your whole life stiff
o harbinger

o gull cry
over the waste treatment tumulus

the hill of trash with little methane flowers
blue will-of-the-wisps on an artificial hill
all grass and the drama of unloading trucks
into the forgetting
and the gulls are not deceived,
our place
is in their cycle too, the wheel
they scribble in the sky
rolls us up too. This market earth.

5 April 2011

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I want to do the right
when there is none
only less wrong and less hurt
and the trees are mostly shadows

and who knows? Despair
is the easiest fraternity.
Sorority. Hemp and horror,
gas and remorse. Drive there,

try to make the mountain
be there when you come,
park in the visitors' lot
and climb for dear life.

The sky is always the same
distance away no matter
how high you climb.
Even though there's no air

you're still here, the sky
amazingly distant, brighter
maybe even further away.
Maybe the sky starts here.

5 April 2011

JAMSHYD AWAKENING

it is a man not a place
a wine not the glaas it's in

wake up, man, love
only what is far
the near has already forgotten

the long neck of that beautiful woman
wake her too
from the dream of being somewhere

Jamshyd is the man
a king maybe or something like a king
and what I am is the gardener

anybody who says "I"
identifies him or herself
as a doorway and a garden

and the vineyard's sheltering stone wall
and the wine pressed out
and the sugar of time that ripens it

I too am what is furthest from myself.

5 April 2011

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Bless it to lift high
into the new air—

we are born from the pelvis
we remember bone

scatter goods across chapel
seamen slumber over charts

because the Line is with us
and the blue continuous

who are you? Answers
are mostly angels anyhow

if a child stands on his
father's back he'll see

the further, the world
breaks here you can see

the edge of it as you
fall asleep—over it

the gods live there
ardently literal in desert

moonlight. But we stand
on the ground, the salt

rimmed lake before us.
Pregnant already

with everything we think
there is something to see.

6 April 2011

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Love has no gestation period
it wakes up quick and stays inside
incapable of exit, the highway
is a song like that, childless vehicles

hurry to each horizon, will
the gas get there? is there a shape
to what happens? does all
our experience add up to something?

If you see a contour, worship it—
snug hips of a pharaonic queen
beautiful for four thousand years
but finally only made of stone.

6 April 2011

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It takes a while for the syntax to walk.
The words come tumbling easy out
before their musing nursemaid Grammar
grabs her shawl and hurries after them.

6 April 2011

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The word turns green when you walk by it
then there are no more nationalities
there is the old horse standing by his trough
and the newish moon swelling over him
because everything turns out to be pregnant
till there is nowhere to turn except the obvious
that skinflick of habitual necessities
blessed are they who wake the children
from the waking dream and blessed twice
those who wake the stone, remember
water is a kind of rock as well, touch
and make the healing fountain flow.

6 April 2011

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Adust. The burnt world below.
Bent, over the knee of the sky one
the earth sprawled. Touch.
There is Being and there is Repetition—
the latter is the usual habit
of the verb ‘to be.’ But to be,
pure and no again!

6 April 2011

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[minding road]

The swath of you
through trees
I need your clothes
to find your bees
deep in the under
life of leaves
tumulted autumn down
to make or claim
a way between

A robe (Ishtar
is Esther is Astarte

is a star) remove
a word is radical
(the root of me
in you he said
she laughed, reviewed
how to be nude
in the woods?
own the ground
easement on the
trees (drus is oak
is Druid is a tree)
the etymology
deceives honestly
I find (my way to
you) (she laughed,
you think I'm tree?
the street is silver
it comes inside me
and goes right through)

All around what is given
is the ring Pass Not
so we stay inside
snug in the adequate
knowledge who we are—

“so I go back to the road

I lift up all the footprints I made
in getting where you are,
I wrap them snug and press them to me,
back and back I go until every step
has been accounted for, lifted,
loved. rolled, controlled.
When I am done there are no steps left
and I am nowhere. I have turned
there inside out. The road
ungoed. Now I am water,
I spill on thee,
faithful, blue as wool, yellow
as October, new.”

(What was happening
was taking a cloak off
was the same as the gate
opening was the same
as going through)

It seemed to me we walked there together
the trees were long-haired maidens or priestesses or something
and they lifted their hair as we made our way there
but there was none. And suddenly
on that empty road
silver as dawn we were alone.

6 April 2011

(towards *Striations*) INTERMEZZO:

Two Letters

Dear M.,

sometimes I think you claw your world apart just to see what else there is. Or what else is there, beyond the beautiful ordinary. Beyond your nice life, your toy husband, your pretty little cat.

Is there (is it) something more beautiful still? The good is the enemy of the better, our sages tell us, so maybe for once you believe what we are told—

you tear it open to see what's there. Anybody would do it if they dared.

Is there a beauty beyond beauty? Is there a beyond beyond beyond?

Like the ever-expanding universe the cosmologists tell her about, is there an endlessly receding horizon of beauty, of worth, of whatever it is she tries for, whatever she slashes the world apart to see?

—P.

Dear M.,

if a man can't sleep with his own daughter, with whom should he sleep? Isn't she herself the chosen vessel, *vas electa*, carved out by his very body and his very mind that looks on her now with the same desire from which, long ago, she kindled in her mother's womb and took form? The ancient Thracians when they came down into Greece spoke of the father as Pygmalion in love with his creation. They tried, successfully, to hide the lustful father, urgent with alchemy, inside a gentle myth of the unlikely sculptor, incidentally a wise encomium of art. They were hiding the alchemical father, who knows he must let the morning dew of his seed settle only in the single valid rose, his daughter. They were hiding him from the crazy monotheists of the Mediterranean basin, with their neurotic anxiety about incest. What anguished people!

You and I would do better to bethink ourselves of Egypt. They hated all those fundamentalists and threw them out, to Sinai or Arabia. Egypt knew better, and turned away from the sea, ever, the harsh unnurturing animal of it, the roaring wet desert. Egypt knew we live best and breed best and think best with our own flesh and blood. The Egyptians unpieced the self, left it scattered on a thousand miles of walls, words, and nothing left in us to cling to or protect.

—P.

(Epode)

Claw the myth apart

anything that reveals

anything that even hints at revelation

hole in the wall, humble stripper,

is beautiful.

The lion tears the story apart

to find the secret—

but who tears the lion open?

Which of us has seen the lion's heart?

7 April 2011

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[dreamt of being another way]

O dear lord how you have suffered, Lady,
 the blue integument of sky all peeled away
 and none left to tell me but the wood of you
 the glue between you and the question
 any face is always asking but you do.

Darling. You are my answer. You are left
 when everything is gone. I tend to sink
 into the structure of things until I wind
 my fat arteries and skinny veins around them
 and there is nothing that does not feed me

love, you are my oxygen. The color of such things!
 Saffron and ocher and sienna and imaginary indigo
 —I can feel it in your armpits, between your thighs—
 the blue rose of forgetting blossoms there
 like any old Technicolor movie long ago
 we never got over seeing, did you?

The things we see stay with us. That is the tragedy
of art, the unforgotten. Yet the Greeks called
Truth *a-lethe-ia*, that which cannot be washed away,
rivered off, aletheia, so what we can't forget
turns into our truth. Travels with us. Even when
we peel the skin of this life's face away
there is some structure of awareness left of us.

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[daily prayer]

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The seraphs are at it again.
You must like snakes I said
yes she said I do you can tell

for six thousand years
we've been listening to what they tell

for them the sky's a horror
and every footstep's a terrorist at them
but still they share their prayer with us

rise from the pool of blood the pool of ink
the hadron collider outside Geneva
from lakes caves ditches

rise from whatever is low and permanent and hard to see
quarks adders angels on the road to hell
important is their prayer
and we are somewhere in between

but forget about us
she said
we are a different story
while they rise up and go down

meaning a different thing.
And you, are you my difference?

They come out of the heart
and go down below

the heart is a garnet
with much of its light carved out of it
the heart is red jasper
with a little light carved in

if you could bathe the human heart in light all the time
humans would live forever

the snake said, so put on the light
and swallow the candle,

what you call hell is a little candlelight inside
or a 40 watt bulb glimmering in the diaphragm

but the claw caught me
the chest gaped
the light pooled out
around and below me
the light was blood

the oxygen escaping,
and the snake had only one
lung she said, and breathes
a singular air

and most of what it breathes
in it keeps inside itself

so venom is the ash of light

the concentrated syrup of all we forget.

7 April 2011

