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Don't have too many superstitions.
Each one of them is a person
and too many of them crowd out your life.
I know this because an old
broken barge or breakwater, sea-rotted,
jagged with fatal splintering, wet
in all seasons, beached and weighty,
told me. It told me more too
but most of what I can remember
was not to be too free with my hands—
touch is dangerous, deceptive, disappointing.
And everything is covered with splinters.

21 November 2011

= = = = =

Just after sunrise
incident light
hurries to catch up with itself—

the fierce bright east makes
ordinary light in the trees
obscure. *Lux contra lucem.*

What is that about
that each entity finally, really
struggles always to overcome itself?

21 November 2011

WINDOW

How sad
that people pass.

21.XI.11

LUCRETIUS

Things happen to happen
because they're there.
They know each other
just enough. Schluss.
The ardor of it all
is what we must adore.

21 November 2011

VENERI

I brought sleep with me into waking
and slugged the day. Slow me better
and the kiss of light. The trees know me.
It came from far away to be me.
Now all the circuitry is fixed. Welcome,
Mother. Every man is your only child.

21 November 2011

A MEETING

for Charlotte, of Clan Robertson

In Scotland walking one time
I came up a ridge thick with dark trees
and sauntered among them
a hint of snow in the air
but mild enough in here

soon there was a smallish man
sitting on a fallen tree
who looked up at me.
A thousand year old tweed jacket was on him
like poets and professors used to wear
but his chest was bare, scant grey hairs
curling here and there. Around his neck
a bright green silky cloth was knotted
everything old.

Cigarettes were offered
but declined. Words seemed called for
but what did I know worth telling a stranger?
Always a problem. He helped by asking
what I thought of all these trees.
I liked them, the dark of them, how they held

the crest of the ridge and seemed to guide
the landscape of the eye north
out of valley of the Annan
towards the far highlands. He spat.
These are not trees, just interlopers,
spruces from Alaska, grow fast
and have no character, the government
plants them because they're cheap.
But they have nothing to do with us,
picturesque yes, but the wrong picture,
the wrong ecology you'd call it
and when I say they have no character
I mean they have none yet, he said.
Ah weary me, he said, we have to work
so hard to make them fit the place
and give off the balsam and the dreams
such trees are made for, trees
are the sources of our dreams, I assume
a traveler like you knows that?

I didn't or hadn't but did now, and thanked him
for it but wondered what the Arabs do
who have no trees, or red deserts of Rajasthan
where also I once walked. He seemed to know
what I was doubting. Listen, and look,
not all trees are shaped like trees, some of them
are invisible and made of air, some curl

snakewise beneath the desert sands but all
fuel the preposterous gospel of the night
you woke from to find this place. Find me.

And who might you be, I felt bold
enough to ask. I am one of them
and I wear green, I have seen
the likes of you climb up this hill
more years than I need specify.
Sometimes there were trees
and sometimes not, sometimes stags
clambered up to rouse the shyling doe,
sometimes birds were my good company,
hoodies and small sparrows and the dawn.
Now you come along to pass
the time of day with, and that's not wrong.
If you linger somewhere long enough
someone's bound to come along and speak.
That's the only kind of talk makes any sense.

21 November 2011

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Irish is a language
where knave means saint
and father rhymes with snake.
And *fear* spells man.

21.XI.11

You are what is not forgotten

the opening of the first door

you are what I have not forgotten

you are what I will remember

you will be the always and the next thing and the again

opening of the second door

sometimes people remember music

sometimes people remember

sometimes the pianist forgets the keys

forgets what white means

and what does black mean

and why are they so small

and far away, or she remembers them

but forgets what's she's supposed to say

what is music supposed to say

what does music say

the opening of the third door

sometimes she forgets her hands
sometimes the hunter
stands in the woods at dawn
wondering why he's there

he forgets what his business is
and why he has a shotgun in his hands

an arrow in his fingers, why
does he study the vanishing darkness
for a hint of something moving

he forgets he is the only person in the woods

the only person in the world

opening of the fourth door

when you know you're the only person in the world
it all depends on you
this is the moral universe
that penetrates our world like a sheet of light

like headlights scraping our bedroom windows

and the cars never know what their lights show

blind lights

they forget to know

you never forget

you are the only person in the world

opening of the fifth door

and there they are

the unforgetten the animals

the Greeks called them *aletheia*,

the unforgotten, the truth

the whole truth of the world is an animal

truth is an animal

a bird at dawn

a wild duck evading the hunter's shot

duck now

safe in the darkness safe in the light

forgotten into the unforgotten

the opening of the sixth door

and there the light is

waiting

and you are often standing there

standing in light

standing in for light

when I have forgotten

everything but you

no one but you

says the light

there is only one

only one light

a door is to go through

to go through and see

where this leads to

because there's always another

chamber of you

another place to go

I can't remember

I can't remember all the places you are

places we have been

forget forgetting forget remembering

a door is sometimes the only

only a door and no rooms on either side

that is a door

a door is a moment that lasts forever

they call it a life because it lingers and it lasts

because it is a wife

and doesn't know how to forget

and everything always

and everything always

aspires to be music

the thing that is always on its way

always on its way to you

always on its way to each other

opening of the seventh door

and here we are
where there are no numbers

they are not numbers
not shadows not doors not animals not birds

they are a little like arrows
flying very high and no one knows where they fall

a little like arrows
only there is only one of them

only one

pure going

as in going with you

in going with you everything is all it can be

and here we are
nothing forgotten at last.

22 November 2011

for Charlotte on her very day a love-word

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And from the bottom of the world
salute a failed color, one
not in the spectrum, not any more,
not in the dark
negative spectrum of the poets
where the color of the light inside the flesh
holds clear, centered against the dark.

A color beyond name and flower.

Beyond dyestuff and sentiment.

You are safe in its invisibility.
And yet it shows in your skin,
glows there when you wake from sleep
still half a story deep in it
and then begin to speak. I watch
your mouth and hear that color then.

22 November 2011

= = = = =

A real November day in November
till a big yellow Subaru rides by:
sunrise and sunset in two seconds.
The man with his dog, they wear
coats of the same color.
Rain loves all of us the same

23 November 2011

= = = = =

No time
to take time.
He tried to live
away from clocks

but they found him out,
came wheeling in
coughing and grinding
his own gears, he tried

to take his time
but time took him.

I feel it too,
feed it
my life and I too
am just beginning,

no reason to die
the bristlecone pines
remember Jesus
passing through California
on the way to Calvary,
they remember Buddha

before him, who
in the three
weeks after his Enlightenment
set his foot on every place on earth,
he smiled at the ancient trees
as he went by.
And there they are still
reminder, challenge, command.

23 November 2011