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My task to fill these pages
yours to empty them with your eyes
and send the senses back into silence
something said, something known.

6 October 2010

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How long could liberty be
I can smell it from here
the sad interesting smell of the other.

Outside of town a swimming pool
kids playing wet at midnight
the splashes louder than their voices.

We think the elements are always with us
we think tomorrow is the tincture of today
when we can know again what now we guess

by talking to one another and touching, touching.
But I don't know. The caverns of Trois Sœurs
phosphoresce with our lost emotions, beast shapes

blur into mere light, water slips down the rock wall.
I make out the figure of a hand. But in this terrible cloister
you can see anything but nobody really knows.

6 October 2010

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It can be a song
and not sing.

It can own things
and let go of them.

How can you grow up
where I did and not be me?

6 October 2010

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There is a cantina
up there in the luna
where they drink rios
and almost choke
there's so much light
they drink too fast.

Down here only the rain
reminds us of that
luminous outpost where
your own breath
sounds like wind
on the prairies
down here in the hoy.

6 October 2010

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“I’ll see you in your dreams”
she said—how can pronouns
know so much about each other?

Who will see whom in whose night?
If I could walk there I would show you
miracles I can’t imagine till you sleep.

6 October 2010

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But there is a quiet space among us
where the ball does not bounce
and the dream is soft beneath
the sleeper's mastoid bone.
Morning coaxed to live
all through the day. It breathes
back in us when we breathe out.
Spiritus always rising, riding
us back and forth, the winds
of guesswork. let it stay
close to our skin
then we will come to know
all we are equipped to know,
the nerveways of Nirvana.

6 October 2010

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Exultant but rare
the starvelings rise
a new politics begins
closer than skin

and they know
all of a sudden!

(There is no other way to know.)

7 October 2010

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Because I believed in your hand
it lifted me.

Because I believed
in your name you spoke mine.

And there I was on the walls of the city
keeping watch on the sign you lit up
one by one in the desert sky beyond.

Even now they are reading me deep
to speak out against the triumphing light.

7 October 2010

THE BELLS

According to the other side
there are bells can be heard
only under water. Romantic
castle built down into the sea.

Over a century they have heard
“the bells of Atlantis” they
called them but I hear them too
too far away and here I am
a quæstor in Atlantis myself
and all the pagan churches
round me chime all day long

but those other bells still sound
far away, they were cast
before all our frail queendoms
or cast themselves out there
before the world was. I think
the world itself and all of us
were formed from the clangor
of that ringing: the vibration
of that peal aligned raw matter

and we became. The bell
is tolling now inside my bone,
afternoon fades towards night
but no darkness solves
all that going. The wind that
moves the leaves must hear it too.

7 October 2010

AND AT THE WHEEL A SKELETON

Dead man driving car.

Bone hand on leather wheel.

Bones fingers reach

down for throttle.

No throttle on new cars.

Bone sockets stare

unblinking at oncoming

brights. Light is dangerous

this white bone man thinks

light kills. I died

of pure illumination,

I knew too much, the flesh

fell away into abstraction

but bone still feels.

My neckbones talk.

How far do I have to go

on driving? Why is life

so slow and so far when

death is everywhere all at once?

7 October 2010

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Wake up says the bird
I do I do
it's time for shadows
in the earthbound trees.

The wind is closed.
No one talks to me.
I'm tired of what's easy,
too weak for what's hard.

I am a sort of cavern
deep with ancient carvings,
I am the government
that keeps visitors out.

7 October 2010

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Have I found a thing worth being?

Black integument

that holds the light together.

The sunlight spooked me,

how could there be so much of it,

I tried to hide but it colored

even the shadows, dark cafes

shimmered in its filtered presence.

All right, I am afraid.

Anything that is so big. Nothing

bigger than the light.

And yet sometimes it goes.

I want a city where it is always

dark but I can see.

8 October 2010

TREADMILL TO THE STARS

The terrible thing about summertime
was when you came out of the matinee
outside the moviehouse the sunlight
is still there, fiercer than ever,
chopping sideways down Fulton Street
under the el tracks, blinding
my tear-stained face, a child
crying for the broken life left inside.

8 October 2010

PLAYING GAMES

1.

Locate left of center.

Pull cards out of your pocket

Show one to a passing woman.

Spend the rest of the day

wondering what she saw.

Or of your life.

2.

Pinky finger in your mouth

try to sing an aria from *Belfagor*.

If you don't know one

change your life and study opera.

Move to the country with cows and old CDs.

3.

Imitate the Rapture.

Leave your shoes outside the door.

Fairies come and fill them with milk.

This startles you but cures you

of a sinister disease you never knew you had.

4.

Wait for a sunny morning.

Roll up a patch of sunlight from the grass

and bring it like a carpet to town.
Offer it to the Lutheran pastor—
he needs cheering up. If he takes it
you get one point. If he declines
you have to live with the brightness yourself.

*

These are games. They are called Living in the World, and come recommended by no one but the words themselves.

8 October 2010

MARCHAND

Originally the merchant
marched on foot.
Peddled. Hermes led him.

Wingfoot, Windfoot
be my guide he'd pray
and light a candle
stuck in a piece of bread
while holding a coin
wet in his mouth.

A prayer. Prayer
puts you in cahoots
with the whole world
worlding its way along.
Prayer links you
to the flow. It makes
you go. It makes things
for you to carry, makes
someone be there
when you come, tired,
to the place you had in mind.

8 October 2010

NOBELISTA

When they give him the prize
it comes with a bag full of guano
scraped from the inside of the skull
of his last incarnation

he can scatter it on his money
it gets smelly but wonderfully increases
till he's the richest fascist
astraddle the equator

when I met him all he could talk about
was the evil of postmodernism and
the greatness and wisdom of
George Doubleyou Bush.

8 October 2010

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Tell the man a story in case he forgets
the birds walking on the slab
holding down his restless dead
Dryden! Chaucer! Middleton! Browne!

birds scatter the pebbles the Jew in him left
and the wine the pagan in him poured out
wanting to be Odysseus in the underworld and
being just slim pickings in the graveyard

a loser sitting on a virgin's tombstone
sketching the inscription he hopes will be his:
Architect of Everything, Dreamer
of Improved Reality, Dentist to the Clouds!

The shadow of the lychgate falls
athwart his ratty notebook. Christmas
in three months time and not a gift in mind.
What will he give her. And will she be there.

8 October 201

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starting with a phrase from Finnegans Wake

“Do tell us all about” us
tell us what we need to be
to be the us you need to see
tell us who we used to think
we were till someone else
not you told us who we
are but never who we need
to be only you can do that
only you can be me so only
we can be us and then no
you is left to tell us all
about who we have to be.

8 October 2010

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A thing to be caught on
before the actual sleep—
in bakeries all over Astoria
I tried to find her, no luck,
life is hard, the woman far.
Still, raisin cake and crumb cake
are on your side however
far you have to search.
Keep going, I tell myself,
the honey sticky on my street map
must be trying to tell me something,
now try Bayside, there's a place
where you can stand on the shore
and see nothing but water.

8 October 2010