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## ARCHAIC SEVENTEENER

So there's all this to worry about  
the bookstore closing, the cobbler gone forever  
and no more Pinaud lilac lotion at the barbershop.

And nobody speaks Italian anymore,  
I try my best with ciao, amore, domani,

but nothing works, not a smile for blocks,  
is everybody nohowsexual? Is it all over,  
glaciers calving, temperature on the march?  
And nobody ever whistles in the street.

So tunelessness has struck the psyche,

even operas are mere declamation, musicals  
all opsis and percussion. And yet it's Easter,  
a gnat got in my ear, the stream is turbulent,  
squills are still blue and yellow daffodils.

I console myself with the obvious,

and smile out the window at passersby  
who never knew the things whose loss I moan.

24 April 2011

= = = = =

The sky remembers—  
is that enough to go one,  
priest, what of what we feel  
right now, with no remembering,

doctor, is that possible  
even, some face you never  
saw before suddenly means?  
What do you do with that

flower sudden in your hand?

25 April 2011

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Blame alpha-dogs for everything,  
they turn into presidents and popes,  
generalissimos, commissars,  
nobelistas, best-sellers, serial killers.

We are at their mercy.  
Only the old Jews understood—  
G-d rebuked every one of their kings.  
and G-d began the Bible with *b*.

25 April 2011

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The letters, the letters  
fall out of the sky,  
cranes brought them  
Paul saw them over Venice  
or geese I see every year  
over Mohicanuk  
our two-way mirroring  
river read

                  them where they fall  
and read again as wind  
says them  
in another dialect,  
every move and every stand  
a sign a message  
I'm bound to understand.  
Letters, fetters—  
Freedom through the bars  
the long pretending,  
the trying so hard to hear.

25 April 2011



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Resistant to remaining  
she flew across the sea.  
Leaving me to mud and magic  
and all my other middle names.

25 April 2011

= = = = =

Creating daylight  
by looking too close—  
does the world  
want me to see it?

Who should I ask?  
The trees know  
everything but tell  
only their birds.

Wherefore I beg the crows  
to disclose what I'm to know.  
Meantime, small birds  
—wrens, I suppose—

are living in the rafters  
of what I thought was my  
house but must be theirs  
too, everything belongs

to everything, the bitter  
grief of money. anger,  
owning. Ownership  
a darkness on the land.

26 A April 2011



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(And yet and yet  
birds own the air.  
And quiet observation  
seems to own the birds.)

26.IV.11

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Capacious ink-chamber of my squid.

Sepia. Pocket cuttlefish

to stain the dry ocean all round me

with Byzantine comparisons.

In the land of metonyms

a simple word is king.

26 April 2011

= = = = =

Where the water went  
before it went inside us  
we are membrane beasts,  
a self's a feeble envelope  
between the sea inside  
and the ocean air around us

and for it we struggled to control  
all the other membranes  
when all the while only the water  
means, only the water permanent.

27 April 2011

= = = = =

It is not right to wrist  
an end to anything.  
Amygdala, fruit  
of a flowering tree,  
ogival, rich with oil,  
can only grow indoors  
in this religion.

In all its loveliness  
it's a just a form  
of what is there,  
hard-edged beyond  
the dreams of words,  
the commonplace,  
the door. I see a special  
face, I understand the  
singular, your word  
among the rainstorm  
of the imparticular  
in which we usually soak.  
You are dry land,  
Cleopatra, fatherless wit,  
a fierce vocabulary,  
profile to the sky.  
We break words together

to get our nourishment  
as common folk break bread,  
we break the old  
to make a new word speak  
and every hour of the  
day is dawn. Unknot  
the syntax, let the  
the sentence sprawl all over  
this newly wakened ground  
bell-helmeted blue  
against yellow shimmer  
flowers of our strange new land.

27 April 2011

## TO SAY WHAT HAS NOT BEEN THOUGHT

Myth is what is always new.

μυθος always a new word speaks,  
seeks,

          mumbled maybe from our own soft lips.

A god is something needs us to speak.

1.

A woman over there though  
is seated on a chair,  
she is Isis, a sign is the signified,  
she sits upon a chair,  
when she leaves the room  
the chair's still there,  
the chair says Isis,

the furniture of any room  
recites ancient liturgies  
we have never heard—  
but hard the listening!  
We have to be willing  
to hear, and hard the willing,  
hard to be so open,

to let your eyes fill with tears  
when you look at a chair.

2.

Each trait of human personality  
or flesh or speech  
is an axiom of theology.  
And Isis is what she is  
and always more.  
A real thing is always larger than itself.  
Look at it closely  
a thing becomes the size of the world.  
Poetry is that looking.

The common lies  
like its opposite  
in our eyes.

We have to change  
the way we see.

*Be me.*

Ferns coming up from the dead leaves,  
unfurl. Speaking  
with these things we make them new.

3.

Your face on an ancient coin.

I give you a piece of paper  
you stuff in your back pocket.  
Not all money has numbers on it,  
not all numbers count anything.

You were my sudden  
daughter in this flood—  
you knew what I know,

open the moment  
with a quick wrist of word.

27 April 2011



= = = = =

Caught so many ways  
a traffic in weather

a seeping from cloudscape to secular  
priesthood scoffing at the ground

of course we love it, dirt,  
it keeps us safe from falling

up forever placeless  
into space, its opposite,

where even the blue itself  
is gone, itself just darling dust.

28 April 2011

= = = = =

I saw an animal walking in grass today,  
Thank God for thee! I cried  
but he replied Thank me.

28 April 2011