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VEINS

One day he noticed
the veins on his hand
were trying to tell him
something. Snaky alphabet
curling inside us
shows itself right here.

Clear. Continuous.
Everybody has one,
a visible difference,
a private hand. Every
alphabet is up to something,
can't help it, letters

spell and go on spelling,
word or no word.
Or everything's a word.
But what is this? Or these?
From time to time
he studies them

tries to catch them
in resemblances,
something halfway

to significance.

The initial of his name
is so clear!

but he knows that
already, the consonants
of his whole name
in fact, as if really
does live in the right body
but who doesn't?

All river and no sea.
Where do they go
through lung and heart
to come again,
the colors of his life
the same as anybody's?

Where does the blood go
to find what unknown
word these letters spell?
He swoons among
immensities of difference
then wakes again

to trace the patterns
on this solipsistic
leaf, his left hand
at dawn, it talks
to him in foreign
tongues, lines

that come from everywhere
and go nowhere
but here they are,
a Babel of form
arising, returning
running with no sound.

The other hand
a different word
writes the first one down,
what do I really mean?
Only this silent hand
dares to tell.

24 April 2012

==== =

Wanted to give you a question to carry with you,
I watched you cross the street
on your way to a foreign country
not just any but the first one of all
lost in symbolisms and ancient violences renewed,
one more girl raped by god.

Where we come from is where terror is.
Tumult, brutality of the first cry—
would you go back to that, blood
on the desert, a brackish water
tepid at the bottom of the world?
But it bears the body up—we live forever.

24 April 2012

=====

A woman called me a pagan—
she must have seen the tree outside my house
a little lilac cruising into blossom
on two days of rain. Or she saw
the fallen timber in the woods behind me
where the red fox hangs out. I say
that these are more like me than I am.
I am a daydream caught in matter
and she knew what I am, no more sense
than a fox, caught in moonlight all day long,
heaven always here in my hand.

25 April 2012

=====

There must be some place to be right in.
The wrong world walks its dog
and the runner so very slowly passes.

Things grind along. I demand tribute
from the passing clouds (cirrus, nimbus)
and they give their names. The light itself

bends before me, paints the shape of me
on the ground wherever I go, making it mine.
And shows me too where I must go.

The royal road infallible. But you hardly
need me to talk to you about death—
my domain involves other fictions, sly

investigations of that frontier country
where doubt runs out and something else
kicks in, an energy you almost believe,

a geography rescued from landscape
and turned into pure experience. And you
suddenly are no one at all brilliantly seeing.

25 April 2012

DWELLING

Looking for paradise
I opened my hand
and let it fall
right in front of me
and here I dwell.

* * *

Dwell. Use the word in a sentence. I just did. Use it again, in prose. Those who dwell on earth, are they different from those who just live there, here? That's a question. A question is a sentence too, a doubt's as good as a dogma. I suppose so, but you're evading telling me what you know or mean by 'dwell.' Dwell is to be here and like it, and look about yourself and make sense of what you find. Dwell is a mixture of living and taking care and paying attention. Didn't you live once in a building called a Dwelling Unit? I did, it was an old barracks building, one of four such, left over from housing refugees. Did you dwell there or just live? I had a little apartment with a kerosene stove, the wind crept in the window frames, some sleek black rats sometimes came in from the woods on cold nights, the way they do. The rats lived and you dwelt? Something like that, I guess—my memories of that time are pleasant if vague. Dwelling sounds vaguer than living, living sounds exciting. The barracks are gone now, and not many houses have to use kerosene stoves anymore, it's really expensive now. I didn't ask to tell your

life and opinions, I'm not interested in your old kerosene, but the sun is shining, it doesn't have much else to do right now, so you might just as well go on living.

Dwelling.

25 April 2012

INSTRUCTIONS

Picture a woman
leaning on the moon
her elbow chill
from that embrace

picture the sun now
creeping up the sky
to catch her at
her conscious solitude

picture the eagle
he senses to seize her
picture the tiger
leaps up to save her

for she is animal
and he is light
so never quite
can live together

though light is what
cleans blood and breath
and animal is the secret
life of light

these are beings
we see all round
nothing but living
nothing but thinking

picture a place
where no one is
and no one to see it
and this is you.

25 April 2012

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Don't blame me if things
finally make sense.

25.IV.12

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Somewhere waiting over the song
a popular arrow aims at a hole
only you detect in that blue sky—all
the other colors come from there,
the angstroms of absence—while you
let the bowstring roll off your fingertips
just as the book tells you to and the arrow
vanishes. All the colors go out. You did it.
It is winter midnight and no stars. Shapes
hover near you, shapes that are sounds—
they make their slow, so heavy, way to the other
hole, the one on the side of your head
and they come in. You hear. Something
but not much. What does a sound want?
Why doesn't it speak instead of all this noise
or whatever music is? You are here alone
and this is all you have left, sound, your mind
has lost its way of knowing. But you have spoken,
shot, killed, eaten, swallowed, listened
and spoken again. Something is wrong in you.
There are holes in the world, you can't see at all
and what you hear is the nonsense of great minds,
the chaconne, the octet, the symphony in d minor.
Ride them if you can, they're all you have,

you can barely hear but you still can listen,
listening has a shape of its own. Only this
and only you and only now. I am speaking
of course to myself, last of all my enemies.

26 April 2012

=====

Lose the line
find it again
wrapped like a new
caught flounder
in newspaper
to bring home
with yesterday's
news, life
is all that matters.
Tell that
to the fish,
they can't read
the words
but knows
it all already
and something more
something I won't
know until one
serves me as I
served the fish,
the line
is dead
till it tells.
Here I am

kaput
on your tabletop
you read me
twice, shake
your head
then think
something better.
Make me
better,
bring me
to life again,
every page
is stained
with someone's life,
the fish the prayer
the noise the word
the sea roar
the forgiveness.
Now read the news.

26 April 2012

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for Charlotte

Mew of the brindled cat
I gave to you because
you're wonderful and Scotland and all,
blood of the true king runs true
and the secret commonwealth
walks round you, throne
twice usurped but still
your supernatural green eyes
make everything round us
spring, and I'm in love with my wife,
o luck of this sleeper
who woke to you.

26 April 2012

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Sunlight creeping in.
Fellowship of fauns
and faerie folk,
you know they're there
because you can't see them
but they shape the light,
sift it through high grass,
hide it in branches,
spill it on the leaf.
One two three
their sacred number
bow in salute.

26 April 2012

=====

Goldfinch zips
past the window
so fast a glint
of yellowness
is all. Speed
itself is funny,
we laugh
from our staying,
laugh
at what is gone.

26 April 2012

=====

Not so often
but maybe too often
I have come to this place
in time, small hours,
weary, aching body,
mind empty of all
but its own unwelcome
emptiness.

It was the same
when I was seventeen
as it is now.

No change. Dull
absence, tired legs,
eyes burn. Not
sorry for myself though,
glad enough to be
still here so close
to the ancient
genuine emptiness.

26 April 2012