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To be so far from myself
permitted once,
there was a Texas highway,
going nowhere but into the night
through yellow places

but our soul was there
if you could find our way—
a woman who was among us
alone with her fear,

a word with a knife.

4 September 2011

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Jungly today hemp damp green

Assam sans breezes

I look at you staring out of the mirror

tiger-eyed from fanged sleep

we can barely see each other

in this dark room we fail

to be able to speak of us as we

man I do not know thee.

4 September 2011

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Maybe this is the freedom
mice feel who do not have
to own the house they live in.
Find another thing to eat. Take
care of the mouselings. Nothing
more than that, ever.
Nothing more than this.

4 September 2011

WHAT IS WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE

The church bell up the road
just set to ringing. A slight
breeze comes up. Monkeys
seem to swing in my trees.
Leaf toss. Crows scream.
Hawks ease down the sky.

4 September 2011

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A book is like a party—
you don't have to be the last one there,
don't have to stay till the end,
don't have to pass from the excitement
of new discourses and new flirtations
into the bleak dawn of the last page.
Leave while you're still having fun.

4 September 2011

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Lasting the ledge
the climber claws
into eagle guano
breathes granite in.

Everything has smell.
This is *Tlas*, our earth,
third cabin from *Sawel*,
the young sun. I know
all the old names, who
must I be, I have been
clinging to this cliff forever.

4.IX.11

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You are the only part of the answer that counts.

What is the opposite of rain,
what dry substance springs up out of earth
into the patient sky
to irrigate its ancient fertility?

I believe there is a rational answer
to this question. It might even be
Reason itself. Or Reason's opposite,
odd to its even, image-making,
warm breath of the not-so. Or not yet so.

4 September 2011

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Leaves move. Or beast stir.

The corner of the eye
is where the world begins.

What is that
moving at the edge of sight?
Who is my horizon?

4 September 2011

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What is it always on the edge of being about to be?

Grammar itself assures us of many universes.

That which can be said must somehow somewhere exist.

If there is a door someone will open it.

Or close it. These are acts of faith.

“I am the door,” he said, and it is not enough to open it
you have to go through, all the way through.

Not becoming a Buddhist but being a Buddha.

4 September 2011

THE QUINCUNX

Being accord: a tremulous unison
 try other blackbirds to tell your love,
 the pipes the pipes are knowing
 and the sensible world is far—a city
 under the hill, sleek cunning playmates
 raunching through the woods—*materia*
regis—and the Queens keyed accordion
 folkloric in Levine's arms, Libido Avenue
 under the el, and miles away the girl
 and her father safe, safe but the rage
 of oil (*oleum mulieris*) the virgin boys
 dream white cassocked processing
 among the altars—God be gracious
 to those who have nothing but desire—
 no grammar keeps her safe from them—
 so many gods only one mouth to praise
 (thunder, lightning) o be near be near
 the lozenge-formed consortium
 the five powers that tell our lives.
 We wander in the courtyard dreaming.
 Some of this is meant for you
 to read a picture to when you have done
 reading the geometry of your desire.
 The caves are all around us, seem dry
 but deep inside the dreamers soak

half-drowned in what they think they want,
the caves are close, the dead come out
to meet us as we go in, the lost word
speaks again, we almost hear it, come out
before it's too deep, you see the sun's
peculiar glisten there are tears in your lashes
what kind of a town is this anyhow
the cars too fast the streets too slim—
but to live between your breasts
in awe of your purity—was this not Babylon?
Hey you up there look down I am your street
I lead my goats along my girls my gods
come play with us, slide down the lightning,
leave the comfy housecats of personality
and be raw out here with me, I have lots of red,
ocher, crimson, cadmium, holy alizarin
so we can leave our handprints on the world.

4 September 2011

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For those who walk in the night rain
stepping between the flashes
of what the sky says
the way pure trees hide among their own shadows
fearful of the nature of
what hunts all of us down.

4 September 2011

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Light enough to see the color of the roses.
Pen spins five times round in the fan wind,
rests. Points to the lost word. Moves again
counterclockwise, clockwise, a baffled
dancer. I'm seeing things.
Seeing things stand still or move. Or 'dance'
by the conventions of romance, when we like
the way things move we call it a dance.
Eppur si muove. I go to the Indian grocery
thirty miles away for bitter gourds, black-
peppered cashews, yogurt, cumin seed.
Is this also a dance. Steep steps
up to the doorway, hot in there, amateur
architect must have made those clumsy steps,
the word meant lover once. My antibiotics
make me itch—back, arms, neck, palms
of my hands will they ever be smooth again.
What kind of thing would a real dance be.
Itchy nipples, eyebrows, ears. Before breakfast
they turn the streetlights off, things normal,
no rain, no traffic, augmenting light: a dance
though is principled, has leaping in it,

means to get somewhere off the ground
for a moment and for a moment stay there
up in the ether where we can't go. Only
the dancer can. Not some ridiculous
ballet, some trivial Black Swan. The dance
we do in wind and rain. It is not raining,
the air is still as it usually is around here,
valley in a valley, notch in stately trees.
The neighborhood of dance. Waiting
to get better. The changed prescription,
the antihistamines, itch or no itch.
The kind of day that seeps below the door
until I'm in the midst of seeing. Seeing
the roses quiver in little twitches of their own,
only petals, never leaves. Light, light
the dancer's body be, no wind needs to move.

5 September 2011

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to our rump logic
there are no rules

heavensent the other way a prayer is
always thought religion was important
it was the word of out there—

and they come down and visit when they choose.
If only one of all the thousands of stories is true
it is the most important news in the world.

The silence of the governments is to me the surest
proof of alien visitations.

They will not have science investigate what they already know.

5 September 2011

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Folly of mute assassins.

The steeple of Trinity
dwarfed in the money.

There are avengers
with silver dollars in their loafers
they spew clouds
and the cunning little murderers scurry
to hide in the small print.

Then the avengers come
quoting Jesus and Confucius.

Cars turn on their headlights in the rain.

5 September 2011

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By gist of image
wield the mind.

We belong to
whatever we see next.

When seen through the shimmer of harp strings played
the face beyond the harp
(perhaps another harper at her instrument)
takes on ethereal inconstancy,
the face itself seems to shimmer and dissolve and restore
as the intervening harp strings quiver.
There is no identity.

5 September 2011

IN NOSTRO ANOTHER

as alien as a shoe
between you and the herbal
island in a slender bay
mild men mingling
their waters with Sausalito
where no trees grow
no room except for money—
as once a covered wagon toppled
among the buffalo—nuzzle
this pink meat—comrade
we tried to hire camels
but our hankies were dirty—
wet from the DNA of cloud we caught,
thunder, out of Eurasia, blue arising
from the burning ground of Coolness Grove
a large one rises with six hands.
Or six is all we see, we worse
than Babylonians, being drunk
is sleeping with tigers. I am hardly
coherent at the most solvent.
Lay off the likes that lie the mind.

5 September 2011

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He's frightened, he's running away.
and why not, because if he finds himself there
in the *place where I am*
then there is no escape.

6 September 2011

ROMANTICISM

The four G's never changed, of course (God, glory, gold, girls) but with Romanticism the interest shifts from how the hero got the G to how it feels to want it, need it, not get it. Romanticism becomes a feast of thoughtful failures—hence Berlioz's astonished welcome of Shakespeare, where everybody dies, and whose heroes and villains analyze their passions aloud.

Here is what it is. Complete darkness. You're naked. Strong hands thrust you into a closet. A moment later another naked person is shoved in with you. There is barely room for the two of you. The door slams shut. You are pressed against each other. Soon enough you sense the gender of the other, slowly the age, ethnicity, health, intelligence, disposition, and so forth come across for each of you from the other. You are trapped with an unknown other, and all you have to work with are your visceral responses, habits of your will and wanting and revulsion. Jammed together naked with unknown being—this is the world of Homer, where there is nothing we can ever do except what we always do. Character allows of no exceptions. No aesthetic distance, no krisis. Just the slow feelings of smell and taste and talk. But you and this other are not likely to speak the same language, you are too close to know. The word needs space to negotiate before it can be understood. You ate too close to love. Only strife avails—only what sets you apart is of any use, so you can fight, so you can claim the boundaries of your own difference.

As you struggle, images flex through your mind of other days outside this throbbing place. Such glimpses are the occasional visions in Homer, the

famous similes that let us breathe an outer air. We see ants scurrying, ships massing at the shore, autumn leaves falling, snow sifting down. They do not heal the contradiction in which you suffer.

That is what Romanticism proposes to escape from. To follow an image out of the blind struggle, to feel yourself alone again, to know from inside out who you really are. Because at last you get a glimpse of the Other – even if at first the other is half a projection of your own fear, your own yearning.

6 September 2011