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The angles of our telling
rehearse a testament to come.
It's the way the grammar fits
on the blackboard, the teacherly elbow
guiding words into nothingness,
surprise, a line made sense.
A circle talks. They sit in themselves.
All round the subject objects swim
daring one to take hold of them.
At most a sentence is a drunken party,
fisticuffs and pregnancies ensue.
You who were here before the Bible
wrote its puzzling news into the moral world
can remember when a sound was still unbound—
a bird might make it, or the falling rain
that woke me at first light before I too
fell gladly back into a wordless sleep.

27 September 2010

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I should have been a sonnet
but I flinched. Motorcades
dragged African presidents
from site to site. The zoo.
The waterfall. The mosque
made entirely of glass.
Culture is all too like grass
it takes over everywhere unless
you work to keep it down.
Children write messages
on chain drugstore walls
and every one of them seems
somehow to be about you.
That's how you know you're home.

27 September 2010

= = = = =

Some times are mid dales
a muzzle for the mood
and winter coming

but in this small

the back remembers dreams—
lie there and listen to the spine
today your only clarinet

a leaf

outside your window lets
raindrops drumbeat on a lower leaf,
lie there and be music.

28 September 2010

= = = = =

How much is left
of what I never had.

The river. The green
heavy walnuts fallen.

Steam on the windows. All
of this is mine.

Or I am its. Identity
is a kind of liquid

fills every crevice
touches every part

of everything. Evaporates.
But still the rain falls.

28 September 2010

CAMILLA

More of these to qualify
long muscles of the lower arm
little rain I love thee
that wields the short-sword
whoever first used love
as a verb connecting one
speaking subject with
a distant unresisting object?
In that moment was illusion born,
Palinurus drowned, Aeneas
waddled up the shore in brazen greaves.
Uphill, the last decent woman in Europe
sharpened her spear against him.
Her horse whinnied in despair
knowing full well the fates the local
ravens were chatting about, ravens
and crows, every morning,
you still can hear them, telling
who love whom and at what cost.

28 September 2010

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Broken tiles
reflected in someone's eyes
the blue of Samarkand
arrested by rain—
stalwart tree
the sun-soaked lawn
remembering.

29 September 2010

= = = = =

In Sarabande City the traffic's slow
the men wear veils to keep from seeing girls.
We are all lost souls looking for hell
but never finding the way. Heaven wants us.
Heaven is hungry. We feel our way along,
what else are bodies for but to find
whatever's there outside ourselves, *this thing*
we did not think and yet is here.
The actual. The dance. Or is music too
the last of our self-deceptions?

29 September 2010

TRISTAN

I want to know
what your body knows
the fall from grace
into certainty
is that it, or truth,
or just being here
with me utterly
yourself like a flag
in the liveliest wind
never changing
its colors. I want
to mean it the way
your body does.

29 September 2010

BY THE METAMBESEN

Let the rain interpret me
tell me whose birthday
I chose to be alive
whose property this is
falling down to the river
first deeds written in Dutch
and why not, English
is a second language
for me too, or so the maples
tell me, those redcoats
coming through the pines—
half a century lived here
and never at home,
always new, loving place,
still trying to find my
way here. That's just personal,
mask-talk, not the real word
that comes through us
despite our language, despite
experience. A man's no more
than the fipple of a savage
flute and knows not ever
whose fingers stop his tones.

30 September 2010

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The hold of the sky
the *in-between*
is all we see,
the being we call blue.
Almost by accident
we live here too.

30 September 2010

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Caught from the commerce of the air
a pilgrim manner—
you have to keep moving to stay still
quiet mind, every footstep
brings you home, the woods
are full of dreamers just like you.

30 September 2010

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In the car to the airport
for the singular departure
one among so many
only the rain held your hands.
Later you look down and watch
the red emptiness of Arabia
give way to a sea-colored sea.
Why am I going, you ask,
where is there anywhere to go?

30 September 2010

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The pilot before the scary ascension
shows in the vee of his open tunic
a holy medal on his chest
pressed against his sallow skin—
that uniform we can't take off.
We smile at him because he smiles
we hope at us. Happy about something.
Important at take-off to think of nothing.

30 September 2010

APPROPRIATION OF NO ONE'S OWN

I stole your man of shells,
Shellycoat, I took the image
and let go the meaning.

These are the parallel texts—
fifty years ago Walter Ritter's
long-torso'd wife
reaching up to fix something on the wall

fixed an image in the mind.
Carol was her name. Nobody is called
that anymore. The shape between
her lifting and the wall,

the all that was not wall.
The sickness of memory,
the beautiful scars.

Fifty years later a beautiful
woman tells me a Scottish story
of a voice from the river
that laughs at midnight,

a voice that leads men astray
and leaves them benighted,
lost and cold. In the very
same place to which memory leads.

30 September 2010