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One monkey was maybe
the only thing I didn't mean

the blowsy youngish woman with blonde shag
I had to send home magically
by quick deft fingertip taps on her scalp
but she shrieked in the church
and she's still there for all I know,
I left that scene and had to find
my own way home. Why am I on a train
to New York? I get off in Poughkeepsie
and start walking north, it's streets
and city all the way, old city, old houses
and a little alley with its streetsign name
led me into a grotto of artifice, an old man
was laying out candles in clear glass bowls
on spotless napery, dozens of dining tables
under a rough but man-made roof
maybe six floors above. We were in a building
made like a world. But in my hotel room
accidentally abandoned even further north
my current notebook, grail of this odyssey,
so to it I hastened on foot out of the dream.

7 March 2012, the Day *1-Ba'ts'*

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Trying to use everything
in a virtue
a green woman standing in the woods
naked as my thought of her
a new myth birthing out of old leaves

as on your midnight fence
dried hydrangeas six months past summer
colorless under the fullish moon

I must make a woman for your man
but mine must be words
but mine must also let some skin show through
shine of a shank, soft of a thigh—

we *are* nature
we tell each other
into being

and there is no one here who is not us.

Traffic is a part of nature too.
True morphology.
We are trees that walk around.

7 March 2012

(for Orestes)

OR:

I washed my face in the fountain
the blood came away
and the leprosy with it—
a wolf came running from the woods
and licked my face clean
then ran off and left me as you see me,
a clean man. Clean,
a face like I was before—
and yet I disobeyed the oracle,
I did not avenge my father.
Maybe it was enough, what I did,
held my mother, held her
in my need and in my sorrow, held her
as son to mother, held her
to natural fact. The way of things.
Nature killed her?

PYL:

The gods disdained to touch you
and sent an animal
to finish the work of healing.
And your father is avenged
in some strange way—
your skin is pure again

so who are you to question agency?

Your mother's dead.

OR:

And Aigisthos, her new man?

PYL:

He died last Tuesday
of a stroke they say
as he bent to put his sandals on
or he fell in the bath
and broke his head, or
sliced his wrists and bled away.
The man is dead—who are we
to question agency?

OR:

Poor mother!

PYL:

She lay there bleeding in her robes
while I chatted with your sister—
a woman I'll be glad to marry—
her style, her energy, the fierce
muscles of her arms could hold a man...

OR:

I leave her to you.

I think I should go back to my mountains.

PYL:

Then take your mother with you.

She'll protect you no matter what you've done.

OR:

Where is her body now?

I do not see it here—

where have they taken her?

And who would dare to touch her?

7 March 2012

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We were trees then.

And we observed the wind
move among our branches
and decided we could go
where it went and be there
as well as here. We were
men then and moved around
as we do still. But still
the tree of us matters, the best
of us has long branches,
shelters many, feeds.

We give shade to each other
and drink from the same
water, our roots intertwining
and no one knows. It is
convenient to forget the wood
of what we were. Sometimes
you stand still and look down
and the ground looks far away
and you almost remember.

7 March 2012

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Nevertheless I'd like to do it
though I've never seen it
or touched it or heard it described

or read an article about it
let alone a whole book
even though syntax is the one

thing I'm good at and like
to see other people coming to be
with it in their mouths

or in the letters they send me
or slip beneath my door,
things have a life of their own,

I'd still like to do it
though I'm not so good at doing
just moving with vague on my mind,

do it and be there when it's done.

8 March 2012

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The terrible pressure to be now
when it's gone already
as champagne gone flat
still keeps its power to inebriate.

8 March 2012

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Wind in the trees
bring her to me

grass in the sun
lead me to him

girls on the lawn
are just a song

everything comes to me
because I'm thee.

8 March 2012

PROBLEM

In the game a problem rose. There are two kinds of children and I am both of them and so are you, so you'll understand the problem. The child who first gets to write on the back of the other (thank you for making it me, the first one to write) goes towards his task with a number of preconceptions, we all do. Different parts of the back call out to different interests or urges in him. Further, he already has (we all do) things he wants to say, things he wants to write on the other child's back, or on any back whatsoever, or all the backs in the world. Though backs are different from one another, they are not as different as fronts are. Or if they are, none of us has learned the nuance and alertness to distinguish each back's distinctness without long study. Sleeping with people, and being with people who are sleeping, her back turned to me, the long gentle curve of spine, the terminal generousities at one end, the lateral wingspread at the other. For example. So this is one part of the problem—the child has stuff he wants to write, but is it really right for the other child's back? Is what I carry around all the time really what I want to say to you? The players of the game come up with a sort of solution. Patience is involved again. They stop a few minutes and eat things and drink things and rest their minds in their soft mouths, swallowing, breathing out, not saying too much. When they are no longer fascinated by eating or drinking, then one child takes off whatever she's wearing so the other child can see her back. The bareback child lies face down, her head nestled in her arms. The child whose turn it is to do the writing now studies the back. He studies it carefully. This is important. Children believe that the back already has some very important messages embedded in it, words they can learn to read. I think children learn to read in the first place by gazing at skin, their own and others'. So the first child takes it on himself to discover that message: what the back wants. Then he will be free to write on the

back. He may choose (there are always choices, aren't there?) to trace with his fingertip the very words the back says. Or to write instead some answer or response to the back's words. The back may be pleading. The back though may be asleep and saying nothing. Then the finger is free to write what it likes, or what contact with the back's skin brings freshly to the finger's mind. Or even the same old stuff I carry around all day long. The stuff you say to other people. We all do though we both try not to. Silence is so often better. What could be more silent than a back, we think. Yet the back is so loud when the finger nears it, touches it, traces along the long of it or swoops across the broad of it, hides in its hollows or prances on its bone. So when the other child can figure out what the first child's finger has been writing on her back, then she will sometimes have come to learn what her own back has been saying all these years (childhood can last a long time). She may be surprised, or just sleepily smile and say she knew it all the while. Sometimes we know what our back is saying.

8 March 2012

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Amid the core
the camel coming
girl asleep
papercut healing

that you can be the middle
and be in, that you can sing

a boy asleep across
the room a sea
opening the door

beyond bewilderment
we are free
already part of each of us awake.

9 March 2012

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Strange lyrics

how to see

captions for an alternate

reality, lyrics

embedded in old

snapshots mothers

love to keep

big trucks delivering

small packages.

The moon.

9 March 2012

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Go for the haunches
where fire is.
All the rest
is personalities
and other lies.

9.III.12

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I had fallen out of that life
I was a tiger for a while
then a mountain gorge
waiting till noon some days
before the sun looked in.
You called me Wolf so I bit.
You called me lover so I fled.
Identity is the thief of life.

9 March 2012

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The crow
goes by. Or
another
much higher

smaller to the
eye. The first
seemed the
bird, the day's

first sign,
low, as if
coming right
out of my roof

meaning of a house.

10 March 2012

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Of course the skin
has a lot to do
with it, a lot to do—
being pale
among bougainvillea
hot thought to
marry them
smooth color smooth skin
and be the only
friction in their world,

tongue in your ear
my loudest word
for I'm a groundling too
an ace of you, an item
on your inventory, breath
on the nape of your neck,

a tool in your hand.

10 March 2012

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When they come towards me I am there—
that's brave enough of me.
And when they retreat I do not pursue,
I linger with the me of me,
not content, yet not in misery.

10 March 2012

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And city mild the think
of it, how fierce
your hands tore at yourself
the wood to make
a forest stand,
splinters in your soul
I coax out with my teeth.
Sometimes I think you
made the whole thing,
the crest highway, the high
desert, the here and there
valley trees, the tall
eucalyptus every kind—
you passion made
this man.

10 March 2012, Boston