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Dreidel of midwifery
of course the earth spins
always tilted on its axis
how can this spinning top
always keep its cant

to the side!

Out of what womb do such oblate spheroids tumble,
this one, singular, irregular, imperfect
hence capable of life,

life the flaw in the weaver's cosmos,
felix culpa

through this mistake
of cosmic physics came

life into the world Life
which the Bible calls *sin*. (*Sein*.)

and the moon slips around us every night
seen or unseen
to comment on this glorious imperfection
from which we live.

2.

Four letters on Esther's dreidel what are they?
I am no Jew albeit faintly jewish

so I don't know, had no such toy in childhood
to play with, a tzatzka that epitomized existence:
we spin a while, we whirl and we fall.
We argue in our fond a prioris
there must be a pivot true and steady,
Pound's unwobbling *chung*^l, the middle,
veering neither to left nor right.
And what do we say when we fall?
Read the letters on her top.

3.

Queen Esther. A Persian name, by etymon
identical with *Ishtar*, *Astarte*,
great *Tara* of Hindustan and our own word *star*.
Queens and goddesses
in her green light
I enlist in her Company.

4.

Woman came in and lay down on the sofa
tucked in under a greengold shawl
she lay a moment then got up
and things went on as things go on.

How quick the earth
spins on its green axis.

We are the letters
the spinning
topples to show,

read us,
we are letters
in the mysterious document

ancient syllabary
learned in clay
transposed with
so much work to stone,

it takes no time for time to pass.

14 August 2011

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Some sort of celebration
of the unremembered.
In that country they have
a Feast of the Forgotten.
Withered flowers are heaped
around a dead tree,
Old letters are burned in the pyre.

14 August 2011

QUAESTIONES

1. How much of your own past belongs to you?
2. Where does memory leave off and sheer Being begin?
3. Is what you remember always a kind of fraud, half-engram and half-redaction, later description, embroidery on what other people said or remembered for you?
4. What is the difference between remembering some action of your own in the past, and remembering the action of some character in a book?
5. Or is there a difference at all? And if so, is it substantial, or is it that the later commentator in the mind privileges the memory of doing over the memory of reading something done?

I am not idling here—I need to know.

14 August 2011

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Knees hurt I have been gardening the air.
I plucked hard-stemmed words out of what people said.
This flower grows alone in atmosphere.
Kairos the appointed time when God turns into you.
You forget the animal you ever were before.
You were alive at that hour and that is guilt enough.

14 August 2011

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Things take longer when you're with them.
They get distracted from their inborn course
by your apparent looseness. We seem free,
at least to ourselves, and things copy our mood.
Every carpenter knows this. The wood is his mind.

2.

So Nazareth is never far from Bethlehem,
purity's best emblem is a loaf of bread
so many substances and energies become
one simple thing. The elements unite.
Ask each other questions any questions.
The answers don't matter but answering is all.

3.

Chickadee on my windowledge—
the eyes live in the soul but sometimes see.
She looks in the window the way the wind does.

4.

I owe this much to the inspector
of love affairs
another poet in fact
slightly older than the heart.

5.

If a man really got along with himself
all he'd ever need
is a waterhole and the occasional gazelle.

6.

Preternatural means beyond all this.
Preterlinguistic means beyond all that.
When one has said what one has said
then the saying really begins
far on the other side of what we mean.

15 August 2011

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Cloaked in appetites
the soul shivers
in the wind of the actual.

But put the new word down
it might work

always for the first time
like love or autumn coming.

15 August 2011

= = = = =

Weather is a mass
of messages
a man remembering
vaguely and telling about it

telling us
who share his climate
a blue house
with a golden chair.

15 August 2011

THE COLOR MILL

An ink drawing by Nathalie Provosty

Steel. The tower.

Trapezoid.

It is the Spanish Civil War again
a dawn made out of steel.

I was born on the Long March
I grew up in the cry of Catalunya
and some of it I knew—
that's where I come in,
looking at the interminable war.

In Spain they had a way
of turning sound into a solid,
here it is,

 a dull blade stabbing heaven
and you hear. Everybody heard
for miles around from that huge loudspeaker
exponential horn on truck back
that bellowed the truth and made it sound like lies.

I love you
sing the fingers to the flute
I run away from love

for love's sake
the flute replies

we need to be
where only silence comes.

2.

A tower. A tower on a mill.
A tarot card without its naked lady.
A sound in black and white.

You built this gear to get to heaven.
You got to me instead.

(But who is speaking?)

3.

Into the hopper poured
late summer days
a mill to grind them
brans and awns fall away
work of winnowing
to leave the color pure
unspoken, the name
enough to dazzle me,
the name of a color

is skin push skin.

We sit and think our secret thoughts,
happy with the sense of being somewhere we can name,
but this world is only breakfast before something else.

4.

You know me. I keep seeing faces.
I don't measure. I don't compare.
I live in the faces of those I behold.
I see a soul intent on seeming,
its eyes and lips disposed
to be, to be and seem and seem good.
The complex image arrayed.
Everything becomes a face.

5.

Easter Island! The gloomy lepers
all that's left apart from faces,
Faces. Giant faces little airport.
Stone faces studying the sky
a thousand years. Why did he die,
Allende, if he really did kill himself,
a man doesn't fail when it fails,
the thing he's made. No point in dying,

dead men tell no tales
but all a man is good for
is the tale he tells.

6.

Sink full of laundry and nobody by it.
Things take care of themselves.
Thinking washes us clean.
From a sink of dirty clothes an Asiatic flower grows
its blossom undistracted by the soiled below.
We are more than where we come from.

A flume of acid runs down through the earth,
no place is the same we've been.

Things take care of themselves—
is that a lie? The Asian flower
balances a hummingbird
and no time passes. Is time a lie
that color tries to heal us from?
The earth is delirious with us
and the drunken flush of evening
besets the articulate day.

7.

This is me holding you against the wall.

What wall. Your will.

How hold? By seeing and by hearing clutch.

The spoken sign never lets go.

You hold also to my hearing, I have a will too.

It is summer it is raining the color

of everything is exactly what this is.

No fakery of sunlight. No hush of rust.

Colors march aloud round the void mind.

15 August 2011

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Here I am in control of the road.
I count the cars.
A rainy day makes the road glossy,
evening, the cars all bright-eyed
are time's hastening flowers.
I could watch them for hours
pass, as long as the light.
And the sky still is. No wonder
I think all this is mine,
I am the sudden priest of what I see.
And a priest is a man who owns a god—
as old days in Iceland, from my father
I inherit the wooden image
you have always worshipped.
Here I am, I come with the wood.

15 August 2011

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Don't say a word
till the word comes.
I want the word,
work it,
worship it
when it comes.

λογολατρεία

And the bird sang too.
The one neurosis living beings share
to sound, to make a mark,
to leave it there.

16 August 2011

= = = = =

Near the cliff
the maidens sat
counting the sea.

(on Blout's Headland)

And from what distances
the molecular lift
that makes, marks,
one wave comes
there to be me.

Because you stared
out into the Sound
I had been born before,

to hurry all my years
towards that appointment
when I became

there you were
with your attendants
and somehow called me
all I ever want to be is answer.

16 August 2011

BROOKLYN

Reading is a kitchen table
reading is night nowhere
else such keen
appetite to take in

Night night where you
eat talk write letters
the chevarah sits around
now all alone you

read. You take
the word in. So many
years I sat there ago
right there where you read me
where the page
talks loudest
unlost in murmur
the sacred posture
weight of a body
someone reading
weight of words
pressed to the
midnight chair.

16 August 2011

SUMMER WINDOW OPEN

Our will to disbelieve
weakens our diplomatic relations
with the Kingdom of Faerie.

Veritas in rure. It took me
years of living in the country
before I began to know their presences

ambassadors from the earth.

16 August 2011