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Displacements. Years pass.

People go to islands

every island is far away

so not to remember

a goal is something gone

the sea is around it

against it

without punctuation the sky

plentiful answers

fruit in the mouth tells

names have tastes

you are the fore-edge of a cloud

distance between bodies is made of light

no grounds for despair

divorce is a kind of weather

spool climate of far places

one long hair caught in a tender spot

eyes on the palms of her hands

only she gives off light
white people look half baked
not done yet is that why we talk

pale palaver punishes stillness
roadside shrines the girl sets down
one tray of rice on one tray of flowers.

12 August 2012

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Always trying closer than can
a forward looking breath
stirs the pale hairs on the forearm
the opposite of apocalypse
the shrouding the hiding
Calypso is the girl who conceals
the nature of someone in his seeming
the trees surround her he surrenders
clouds look on so slow they move
wind on his knees
do they even want him?
What do they do with their prisoners
everything worth saying is getting ready to be said
at last the thunder
sometimes the rain
delicate lines—
once he drew them with water on her palm
then sprinkled sugar on them
blew off the residue so the lines showed
read them told them
then licked them off with his tongue
causing her to feel faint
for just three seconds then smile—
how difficult it is to read

or to be read!

She gets the meaning he gets the sugar

he can't tell which taste is sugar which is skin

she lets the wetness dry on her hand

all experience leaves you sticky

afraid to say yet afraid to say go

aparte take this chalice from me

I have to drink

birds in the sky without saying why.

12 August 2012

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There's something obsolete
already about an airplane.
There's one overhead right now
and when I hear it I think
it's forty years ago—
the airstrip by the Kingston Bridge
looks like a yard sale
all those tacky little planes
waiting for someone (who?)
to love them up
into the sky. And the sky
above them looks old-fashioned
blue and white and pink
edged cloudlets—
Christ, where is the new
the cutting edge
the color beyond the world?

12 August 2012

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Dissolving

Styrofoam in acetone

or make from it rise

homunculus pure white and dangerous—

alchemical man

without a laugh

all shape and no behavior

and then the projector lamp blew out

and we were blind. Back to back

creatures of a single risk—

a face in the cloud.

12 August 2012

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For the pure of it,

the god.

Or some conniving after

to find god in the other or

other *as*,

tender blasphemies of

the word,

the beginning.

2.

It seems we have to say it

over and over till it turns true

and we know the places we come from

dank subways down

blushing cement steps,

empty roads by elderberry,

summer shoddy beaches,

were real enough to get us here

where I feel you beside me and know—

but not know enough.

3.

Religious stories told to children

to shape the shadows in them

giving faces to things.
Fears glories fascinations
—that tree of talking heads
the Persians drew
bright colored with all the tongues of men

as if women were silent in those days.
Or I can't hear.

4.
William Rufus took an arrow
through the eye and died.
Margaret Murry has a book
that tells us how and why.
She lives a hundred years
and knew more than she said.
I never met her
but we were living
on the same earth at the same time.
In the same old forest new,
on New Year's Day, when time comes riding
to take one's life away.

5.
Still there are roses on this tree.
We call them roses
but who knows who they are,

what thornless pedigree
brought them to America.
Or were they always here
like you and me?

6.

So the poem lives by itself on the high prairie

and we can bring people to visit it
from time to time,

maybe we get there hung over or still drunk,
a wagon full of girls from town,

wandering preacher with a wolf cub for a pet—
you know the story.

And the poem always knows.

13 August 2012

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Nearer to the Styx
you start to remember.
So many things
claim to be your mind.

Claim to be you.
Desires. Regrets. Remorse.
And which of all these
yous is you?

And so you have to rush
to the river to cross over
to where there is nothing
left to remember.

13 August 2012

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Something about monkeys
they have tails
tells us something.

And they have hands
on their feet as well
quadrumanes the French
call them, four-handed
folk of the forest
we would say if we let
ourselves remember.
Monkeys are nimble,
apes are thuggish and clumsy.
What happened to them,
what happened to us?
Where is my graceful tail?
Where are my other hands?

13 August 2012

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How to tell a story
so the story listens.
Invent some skin
and let someone slowly
come to inhabit it.

We are built from outside in—
too many stories think
and think that character's enough.
Character is just a behavior
of the skin, like a rash
or prickly heat.

Every child knows that. I am my skin.
And mothers say each blemish,
freckle, pimple, wart—
that's your badness coming out
a proposition with which
Dr. Hahnemann would agree—
the skin's the writing tablet
for every woe—
Freud would concur, and Charcot.

Start with skin. Start

with touch. Everything else
is consequence not cause.
And most of all because
around the skin there is another skin
made of light and sometimes and gleaming,
the elf-shine of our real meaning
that we can see now and then
each other as we really are
as painters mostly can, and writers
have to trace as best they can—
skin and shine are the same root word,
the seeming of what we are.

14 August 2012

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What makes me feel
better than I am?
And why would I want that?

14.viii.12

= = = = =

Techniques for being in another
country without leaving home
begin with the breath.

Short breath long breath
wide breath skinny breath
deep and shallow—
the mix matters.

Here, I'll breathe you to France—
how the w
ords get in
errupt
ed tells
a lit
tle bit how
to g
o
and then you're there.
The air smells different,
traffic rattles through the trees
the parish church
begins to bong its bells.
Breathe in, now out

and Munich is not far.

See the nervous artists trying to relax

on the nice warm autumn grass.

14 August 2012

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Mastering them to master us.

The discord is only cognitive—

in her eyes

you see you're alive.

That's all that matters—the beatific gaze

that infants us.

We are born again each instant from that glance.

14 August 2012

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Read too much and not enough.
 I've never been to Africa
 is this a discontinuity
 nothing happens but what we know
 rhapsodies of defunct societies
 enrapture schoolboys now—
 Greek is a boyish language
 which makes Sappho and Corinna and Praxyla
 all the more remarkable—
 wilderness has no beginning
 no natural end
 things to do and not remember
 remember not to do
wu wei
 the white banner raised above the fray.

2.

Fewer names than feelings.
 Let's play a game—
 name the one who touches you
 from across the room.
 No movement permitted —
 sweep the fallen leaves
 off into the woods.

Analyze the pattern of stream flow
in this region— it gets
warmer when the sun rises—
that much even I know —
action at a distance —
you'd be angry if you knew what I was thinking—
the rivulet meets the stream
meets the river meets the sea.
What does the sea meet?
Is it the sky, that blue-grey maybe
from which the rain?
And how is rain different from my hands?

14 August 2012

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Let the boxes linger unopened
there's plenty of time to be somebody else—
no need for now.
Past gone, future nowhere, present an illusion —
drink my coffee and think myself wise.

14.viii.12