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That imaginary creature
myself as a child—
say at seven (like Rimbaud)
just before my world changed.

All day long my head
was full of thinking
(just like now) just like yours
reader.

 All day
but what were they
those thoughts,
so many, so urgent,
beautiful, thoughts
that needed me
to think them, now where
no one can say.

 And night's
dreams and fancies and fears—
who knows now
what I say in the dark?

What was I thinking?
Where did the thoughts
go? And these
now, urgent in me,
I will forget if not
tomorrow then
in ten years.

What
was I thinking?
How did I explain
the world to myself
as every child is doing
all day long, thinking,
trying to find himself
(‘playing’ they call it),
himself in the world,
trying to be left alone
to do his thinking,
trying to know.

I know
when I first was told
about Heaven I knew

at once it is a place
where knowing is, go
to heaven and know.
The clock ticked
in the empty kitchen,
I stood between the door
and the daybed and knew:
I will go to Heaven
I will finally understand.

7 January 2014

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Place a little
in the middle
of a page
and let it age.

A year from now
take it out
and it will say
just what it says now
but you just may

be different, be able
to decipher
what it really means,
be able to go on,
to complete,
to find the song
some dumb thing said
long ago now.

7 January 2014

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If there were
waiting to be done
an animal
could do it for me—

but we have *other*
work to do
 in time
while we seem waiting.

Amazing blue light
from deep inside
must draw to us.

7 January 2014
Kingston

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It is said
the dead
have a way of knowing
themselves among us
so that even we
in our thick business
sometimes hear them
sometimes understand.
This is their work
not ours, we look up
sometimes at the thought
of one of those who have gone
and maybe our hands
at that moment are active
at their work,
whatever it is.
Who knows the intricate
enterprises of being dead?

7 January 2014

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Marjoram. A trumpet.
Soprano. Tea tree oil
treble chorister. England
my England. The chapel
in Cambridge. The coast
of Norfolk. Little river
I love thy sly descent.
Ambassador from the Queen
of Turmeric. The dead
woman sings and sings.
The difference is the food
they eat—dust and the sea
for them, wheat and milk
for us. Prince Rurik from
a far country. Odysseus
in Karelia. I too am weeping
at the loss of the old things.
The dead woman sings.
When I was born the song
was over already but I never
knew it. I still don't know it.

What shall I do with all
I know that has no place
to speak or sing? Lavender.
The sunflowers of Vaucluse.
As good a name as any.
I have forgotten who you are
I'm trying so hard to convince
that nothing ever dies away.
Dear love, just listen to my opera,
that's all I ask. The skin
of music caresses you enough.
Old kings with oiled beards
Anatolia. Rising sun land.
Patchouli. ships hurry towards us
carrying spices and Vikings.
How can we know? How can we
ever really know? Lilac
will come again. Everything
is always. How young the voices
of the ancient dead. Machaut.
The Catholics got it right, it is
a Mass, an eating together and
a sending of the thought of it

nowhere. Everywhere. Sending
this into wherever there is.
As a sound goes out. Geranium
the harsh smell. The window.
Faces in the night daring
to look in. Not through glass.
They come on subtle embassies
uncommon avenues, lost senses.
Through the odor of wintergreen.
It cures more ills than you suppose.

7 January 2014

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That music is hearing me again,
a man with two mothers
the opera sounds somewhere
just north of the knees.

what can you do with an ocean
when the bones are deep already
caught in the air of always hearing
but what is there to hear

just this interminable picture
the ears keep watching, hoping
the real mother with her blazing
hair will come hurrying home

and tell all his wounds away.
But isn't that what the world does,
the thing so big it can't hurt you
and there's always somewhere in it

where you can stand. And I can sleep.

7 January 2014

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Be a girl
be late
be your mother and father
and leave you alone

that's how it is or runs
the tune in your head
from the beginning of time
be a boy and feel the pain

the only thing more frightening
than a crowd is being alone

try for it
try to forget it
try to be a girl and let it pass
try to be a boy and get over it

you never will I never did.

7 January 2014

WINTER

The petals that had fallen
lay on the table
two days, three days
and were dry as paper.
Count Alström's Peruvian
lily. A crow out the window.
A fox dark across the snow.

8 January 2014

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There are jewels
on the *mani*-wheel
the sun drives—
red gleams I never
and green noticed.
Hello, sun.

8 January 2014

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When can a fact be a fact
and not an instruction?

Everything is a prompt
for something else?

Sign of a sign.
Until we awaken.

8 January 2014

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Not meaning to block the light
the new vocabulary cottons the ears—

I want distinctions, not precisions—
Union flag languid on the Norfolk coast—

limited responsibility is a chimera
everything depends on you. Salute.

Whose tongue is in my mouth now,
whose ancient grammarye?

Casting—

as a role or a fishing line
or a mould from which emerges

something we remember
if ever of what we wanted to do.

Holding close. The cling
of pastness on the cloth of now.

The stink.

I would carry if I could
the whole world in my hand

to keep it safe from me.

9 January 2014

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If it wanted, it was.
Without desires it expires

How to be, just be?
Sunrise soon, a tenor

higher, louder than the trees.

9 January 2014

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Coming closer is a rose.
No petal, all thorn,
still its specter
rises from the ashes.
Out of a clear glass flask
a sharpness leaps,
acumen, and knows us
through and through.
The dancer holds
his heels together
to impersonate the Lord
of Death, the one for whom
the rose has finally bloomed.

9 January 2014

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The girl on my lap
who knew Diaghilev
and sang for Gounod
and one rainy day
in the Prater smiled at Beethoven.

9 January 2014

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Essential oil expressed,
id est, squeezed
out of a letter of the alphabet,

gamma for instance,
Oil of G. Rub it
on the right temple

as if you were a priest
and all your voices sang
in unison/ Index tip

dry, press against left
temple: a current flows
from the calm leftness

over to the hot oily right.
No more pain. No more *tengo*
dolor de cabeza. The first

sentence my father taught me.

9 January 2014

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What a country!
Clocks have faces
and hands.

Lamppost insomniac
someone just before dawn
leans heavy against

the art nouveau iron
smooth rubbed brown.
Everything wants to be a tree.

Or a horse.
If only I could sleep
I could course across the dubious prairie far.

9 January 2014