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A WORD OUTSIDE THE WORLD

wills me to hear it

Beliefs also are forests—
we linger in mazes
monkeying with the dark

But the song won't start
the dream promised,
what could it mean,
a word outside all we mean
when we are the ones
who do the meaning,
what could it mean,
the song won't start,
the old song
morning gives me new—

the humid path
opens at dawn
we wait at the lap
of each other
for that sad old
experiment

to begin again—

but faithless many as we are, so many
time we replicate the original protocol
and each time call it by a different name
and call it 'song'

a hole with something missing

an empty cup
emptier than before
room bed envelope
all the habits of the sky

sometimes I see you
it is not like anything

we are here on a mission
aborted before we began?

here we are, rabid with curiosity
but yearning not to know,
for knowing is fatal
and once we know the truth
there is no sleep

and so we murmur freely
uneasy speakers
shattering china—

wrap each shard in silk
and wait four thousand years

lounging along the antique shops of Warren Street
we grasp that time is the only value,
we live among coprolites and chainmail,
scraps of old lives, ashes of lastingness

time is value

or the only value
is to be here tomorrow

so we do last? or seem to?
not even music knows how to go on
speaking of songs
scabs here and there along the flesh
of memory

the skin of streets

I also know how to caress

curves of the road

dark pines ahead

You get your gold by alchemy

but are too superstitious to spend it

you leave it to some church

and for your poor soul buy

masses, which are also said to be sung—

but that was then.

When chemistry still worked

and the river spoke,

no superstition lingers now

our anxieties are fresh as crabgrass leaves

no wind, no temperature,

by humidity alone sustained,

little lake of air with drowned men in it

walking around the little country towns

this stupid dream I call my past

if it sounds good I believe it

by the broken fountain
from which Roman water still flows
a little rusty a little good for you
we need our minerals
in this solute life
out all night
hurrying away from dawn
with fragments,
music, we say pieces
of music, and no one
to give them to,

friends fall out over money
each visits his own inadequacy
on the other, sad
old men who outgrew love.

Put work on line
so it can be forgotten faster,
a small magnetic storm
erases Iliads.

And why not?
What did Homer ever leave to us?
Isn't this buzzing in my actual ears

this actual humid rainless leafy morning
psalmody enough,
and need no Baptists
howling hymn tunes in my blood?

Why even ask?

It is always the beginning, always beginning.
Isn't this the song you asked for,
do you want to hear it again?

4 August 2010

THE MAN WHO CAME WITH HIS SKIN

The color of my skin is of a red-haired man,
an Ashkenazic skin, sound of a mandolin,
a mixed-up skin all pasty and freckles—
blue veins run prominent through it,
strong veins in weak skin, as if there were
really some power and austerity deep inside.
Who knew? I'm just along for the ride.

4 August 2010

MONKEYS

A long time since the monkey spoke
and when he did his East Coast Spanish
was clearly picked up in acting school.
We, whose natural language is silence,
created language as a kind of OK sin,
a sexy blasphemy against ourselves.
But when the monkey started talking
that was natural for him. Only his accent
was fake, as when dogs recite Racine.
Making noise is natural to them,
we humans are more tree than bird.

5 August 2010

OSTRICHES

Ostriches in picture books

look more natural than in person.

They are just too big to be.

How can this be a bird?

Not even the whole sky can lift one up.

5 August 2010

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Of course we tried
and if we failed it was a blue
flag still above the sinking sub—
in this war heaven is far down.

Read the Chinese characters
on the barrel of the old Indian fountain pen,
thirty years I know what it can write
but not what it *says*—

shouldn't you?

aren't you anxious to know,
you for whom words
are most of your biology
and all of your religion?

You're right, I'm wrong—
maybe that is the Buddhist message
this old pen is trying to insist.
Mao taught the same thing too.

5 August 2010

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The patch of sunlight
is still there,
moved further back
a little towards the woods
where a ripe green
walnut noisily falls.

6 August 2010

= = = = =

Language too

“wants to go on”

she said, and old

story gives us

Mercury to lead us,

but how could a man

have invented language?

What would a man

have had to say

worth the fuss of invention,

of speaking?

But Mercury’s no man, no woman—

gods have different flesh, feel

the voluptuous itch of silence.

6 August 2010

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Too many waiting
for the lone beginning.
Not everybody
can begin to day.

It's not up to you
you know the stars
are also innocent,
the fix is in

you can't begin
isn't there a color
in the air today
you can just breathe in

it has no name
and when it's deep inside
you be safe at last
where everything just is.

6 August 2010

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Am I a dead man already?
That patch of sunlight
I keep studying on the grass,
is it under me or over me.

I know certain things, memory's
make-believe, a crow calling
me to now. If this you hear
you're living still. A crow.

Information of all kinds
from the realms around me
I have never entered.
I have never been born—

that is the poet's ailment,
constantly picking up this leaf
stone, touching that hand,
yearning for his own incarnation,

and who can give it to them?
Give it to me.

The women

are leaving me now
like the gods who shuffle away from Antony
under the streets of the city
and I have no streets anymore.

6 August 2010

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The orderly wrongness of being me
chided by birdsong
early, the skreel
of night things ever after
la faute à moi

he is the guilty one,
the pointer out, explainer,
child babbling in the back seat
the names of all the things they pass

how irritating, maddening really,
that is, the ceaseless chatter
of a mind confirming its
existence by naming,

how irritating the ceaseless
commentary of poetry.

No wonder everybody loves me
and nobody really loves it.

7 August 2010

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This is your day

the old clock on the landing
beats for you today,

I have no grandfather,
no right to that kind of time,

I give you the gold watch
the bank gave my father,

I know too much about the day.

8 August 2010