

8-2010

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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

## A MORNING OF BLOODSUCKING FLIES

Humid brings them.

They make you think of bad friends  
who suck you never quite dry.

There's always more of you  
for more of them.

                    They come,  
they nestle on your skin  
and when they're done they carry off  
most of your thoughts and words  
and all your will to think or speak.  
If only they only wanted money.

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

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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