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THE MYTH OF REDEMPTION

We were not bought he said
we are not chattel not slaves
to be sold or bought back
he said the earth is not
the pawnshop of the galaxy
and God the Shylock whose own son
has to break his back to set us free

We are not slaves he said
but we are not free
as long as we are we
we are trapped to begin with
in the terrible comforts
of identity he said

no one can buy our liberty
but someone stands
at the doorway he said
holding it open he said
to show the way out he said
I am the door he said.

15 February 2010

30.

Meshes mean me the voices
family matters murder the ear

I am deaf from sheer neglect
the snow is always perishing hence beautiful

men ask women for the time of night
men don't know women are the sun herself

it's all about hiding and being found
all the rest of culture is a battered rose

we are stronger than war we can give it a name
to have seen with own eyes Danube's Iron Gate

leaving the sea behind came to this brown hill
the opposite of everything

he took the long-stemmed rose and pounded it on the table
spread its petals and found food he gave to a child

we are nourished by mysteries alone
calm this morning like a book you read before

15 February 2010

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Things to look at start with fire

then water as it falls

then water as it rolls or rests before you

then all these things together as the human face.

15 February 2010

first Rhodia text

31.

This music was popular once but so was I
walking in chains I made for myself

there goes a cross without a Christ they'd cry
No I am water with no well give me your cup

I am a flute at midsummer a winter drum
identity is thick around me I am sick with me

listen to yourself your grumpy raptures
I am an epic with no words you fool

You fool an epic means saying word what is said
the falling snow says all you need to know

once had a friend but fell from her sky
once the phone rang the day was spoiled

you copied that sentence from a bathroom wall
wake the sinus with a pinch of vinegar

I drank too much I used up all my wild
learned to walk above despondency as if it weren't there

just stand over there and be a girl
do something no one else can do

snowing again on the rights of man and the citizen
weather is the only thing that makes sense.

16 February 2010

32.

Of course I need you you are blue
on chariots the triumph of the naked elements

cello suite snowy boulevard in the Bronx
I knew her even before there was such a thing as food

when there was only tone and gaze and men strayed
through night like ships on a windless sea

no one learned where they had learned to kill
every man's hand holds something in it

gods gave us such instructions
flesh or brass or delicatest bone

all the things he told us came half-true
but the deepest snow comes only to go

minks and weasels by the streamside quick
why do killers have the softest fur

am I in the thrall of paradox
or when it comes down to it just a man

people learn to forget and forget to learn

he quoted from a tired book

but from whom is wisdom spoken

and by what silver plumbing brought to mind

take away comparison the rest is poetry

caves of Cappadocia my limestone hat

everyone and every culture was here before me

I must be the one they were waiting for

King of the Cats and the Seal Queen's son

lastborn squeezed out in tired world to new

list the sounds you don't like acoustic psychanalysis

but what is the tone to which the penis listens

interval of the ascending ninth sudden cathedral

naked on the altar all you ever meant

just say who you are and let me decide

and in the mail this morning Dalilah.

16 February 2010

33.

Maybe leaf but will it flower later
the shadow broken lets some light pass

a morning thing a letter from an old flame
casting neither light nor heat a name alone

the mason's secret lust for stone
read deep in someone bones of feeling

not nature nasty by the creekside literal
but among the scattered city humanists

culture is dismemberment in time
one love family dinner dawn of worlding

if word is bone then what the flesh is
weighty wet glad touchable intent

dragging up the hallway me you hear me
come to my bronze door clever runes to keep you out

names of all the flowers you never recognize
insert right here in fat blue ink and pray

the god of gardens has an ancient name
you have none you are alive

no need to touch what will come again
no need to pluck the thorn-safe hour.

17 February 2010

34.

Can I ask the oak again its need
the broken mirror of its still clutched leaves

brown late winter snow is passing through
what does it want with so many hands

uplifting by itself is the same as prayer
any falling god will understand

we know because we know how we are made
each me a thought in someone else's mind

myriad man all I can do is understand
goats have thin chests cannot take the cold

what happens when you smell your own skin
is it far away from you a far place where you come from

can the sea take you there
I am tired of being continuous I just want to be.

17 February 2010

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The arrogant young man
is the flying trapeze.
He grows up to walk slow.
His knees hurt.
God smiles at him though
on those days when God exists.

17 February 2010, Olin

= = = = =

I'm looking through the big glass windows
of the faculty dining room
out at the snow stark trees, students
slowing after lunch downhill.
Till I remember sitting on Eighth Street
in the window of a luncheonette
sixty years ago watching girls pass.
They all look like dancers. It is the same glass

17 February 2010

THE DUET

(Let it mean what music was)

Wann kommst du, mein Heil?

I come soon I am the sound
I am a part of you
yes you are my part
a part of me the music
I am the sound of something

*(in Bach the music says more than the words
or the words offer and the music takes
and takes us to the place the words propose or)*

I am the sound of something
striving O the things
we do to the air
when are you coming my medicine
healer savior whole of me
entirety of which I claim
by music to be part
to be a part

I am a part of you
by the sound of this air
we breathe or you
have no need of how we sound
yes I have need of you
the whole of me need
only the part of me
that is you to be complete

I am coming, coming to the part of me
that comes to me

closer and closer the air
moves till there is no way
that is not us
whole and healed and
I am made of you
you are my part
that makes me whole.

18 February 2010

35.

So much waiting like the prince for his nightingale
I don't know that story so make it become me

the way everything I hear makes me want to be
myself or another scattered bones of bread my sea

your holy secret side the revolution the drop of blood
theory turns into Stalin in three generations

why do you blame me I am the hidden priest
I share my own terror with the world

no man had ever given all men all his hate
I read the anger in their souls and brought it to light

gave it light gave it to the light

I killed because they wanted to

can you blame me for giving what they wanted
I am the artist of fulfillment

I bring to each thing the death that belongs to it
how can you call me cruel when all I did was speak

I spoke your mind I made the day
I made the day itself thrill with nightmare

I gave you the secret vengeance of the soul
spread out on ten thousand miles of skin

I kept you vigilant I cured you of your dream
all comfort banished from the cranky mind

you would be nothing if I didn't hurt you
pray next time you get a father cruel as I.

16 February 2010

36.

Where was the prince? Wept his eyes dry.

Where was the nightingale? A feather scratching an old record

imitated by the orchestra but who will imitate me

the frontiers are made of ivory the bridges break

an ant walking on a woman's elbow the sky is safe

each wonders at the uselessness of their encounter

in this republic there are no citizens

deaconesses in miniskirts baptize right and left

lust liquidates all politics

there are no numbers in sunlight

no numbers in the woods the snow the trees

birds can never be counted even when only one of them

David disobeyed and took a census

who are you to count my faces said the Lord

who are you to pluck all my ripe fruits

when I gave you only one mouth

it is morning all authority is still

the air is broken in small pieces a child can talk

around the nursemaid's knees his arms wrap tight

any second he'll be born again and speak no more.

18 February 2010

REVERENCE, a sermon

Reverence for the sanctity of life is chauvinistic
unless it includes reverence for what is not life
in our usual way of seeing it. Not just animals
are godly, the stone is too, the dark is too,
all molecules far scattered in deep space
and the space between them sacred too.
And emptiness—out there, in here—
the holiest of all, the silence
from which wisdom speaks,
the word we confuse with god, the word
that is as close as the universe comes
to an immaterial being—and it too
is carved out of silence alone.

18 February 2010