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94.

We call the river Goddess-Meadow
only she can walk there we must ride

captives in canoes or pretend men on rafts
but the water takes us where she goes

there is no difference between willing and going
they are the same moment in the mind

synthetic bible open on her desk
she waits the coming of the ersatz angel

and he comes he comes to be real
sometimes any commandment will do

anything that hard to keep
anything that lets itself be broken

see we move across the stage and cast no shadows
visions only come when someone's looking

shadows are the products of our own attention
just like colors just like the sea.

24 March 2010

POETRY

I listened so hard to you
trying to hear myself in what you said

all I could hear was an apple rolling around in an empty carton
but then the rustle of the brown paper bag
when Olson worked out two of his last three potatoes
to give to a neighbor's kid

the people downstairs have to be fed too.

24 March 2010

= = = = =

No exaggeration. The lilac
tree or something like that.

There is such a thing.
Today for the first time this year
the little blue-eyed grass flowers

and for the first time ever
in a new patch of lawn by the garage,

o garage I have loved you all my life
a house for what is not me
a house with a smell of its own

a stable for someone else's hours.

24/5 March 2010

TIME OUR MASTER

Broken pillars of the temple
lie around waiting for the cameraman
to film them backwards up again
with Samson still drunk in her arms.

We broke the Bible.

The story
slipped around his neck and shoulders
like her long tawny hair
until all it meant was how he felt.

As if all meaning were just feeling
in other words.

The stone
of which we're made turns tan
from centuries lying in the sun.

The pure white of the mind
becomes the brown or ivory skin.

We walk around, each one of us
is Lazarus resurrected. That's one more
problem we got from the Bible.

24 March 2010

ARABELLA (2)

Evil Elemer's Aria:

She was I knew the kind of girl
all flowery and true
who would not keep her sacred parts
shrouded from the air
the air of life! compounded of
all human longing
even the dark wind flowed
up between her knees

a wind that my hand
now suddenly remembered
reaching up to caress the cool sculpture
she rounds off such heat with.

24 March 2010

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The real work of religion is to build churches.

Temples. Mosques. Synagogues. Chapels.

Places. Spaces where you can be alone in public.

Learn to love in silence. Learn to leave alone.

Temenos: space set off from ordinary

where ordinary people come and sit once in a while

and become God. Or get a little like God.

Whether there is a God or not

this is the space where a God must be.

24 March 2010

95.

Or subtract me from the list of migrants
I have vexed business here to bird enough

do not agree me ere I answer stone
you know too much of what I mean not who I am

meanings fade identity endures
how do you teach when someone does it

whatever it is a bird brought word of it
maybe the word was already enough

maybe all that happens happens so we make word of it
all our deeds are done only to be news

history is not what happened it's what gets spoken
all those men died at Troy to make an Iliad

what do we make from all our massacres
our mercenaries paid to slaughter in the deserts

that East we used to dream so beautiful
nard-scented Araby and opulent Lahore

we take our vengeance on such loveliness
puzzled and wounded by its intermittent thorns

stop killing come home and close the door
spend years praying for forgiveness and feed the poor.

25 March 2010

96.

Let me lean the other way
a four-sided triangle for Aristotle

certain men were walking through the sky
politics the art of distracting the poor from their poverty

came down the road... Yeats said get... freedom
...you still break stone he said he said

certain men are walking in the sky I said
I see their shadows ripple on my book

I watch them shift the clouds all around
try to copy what I see these words are part of it

shadows of shadows don't get mad
we know who we are were born this way

there are things you can say that you can't think
he spoke to the young man the young man rose in fire

go listen to the Carolina wren above the barn
louder than your neighbor's wind-chimes tolling

afternoon is on its way out the wind comes up
the wolf comes out one more day to understand

I don't want to touch you I want to remember
why do we have to go on talking when there still is light?

25 March 2010

GOSSIP

I am caught with a painted lady who am I
I am mistaken for a mountain in Peru but by whom
I am rapturous with silence all day long
I am reluctant to meet adults those exhausted children
I have grown tired of food and drink
I save my appetite for better things but what are they
I used to go to church now church comes to me
I don't think I know any more about me.

25 March 2010

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Asterisks mark remember something else
there's always something else a wall with windows
through the window women are to be seen walking in the blue street

the street is always evening always raining
the way it should the way it should
the rain needs no footnotes

but the women need names
we can't leave them out there walking in rain
restlessly everywhere the blue namelessness

on such a night the stars are not out
it is just as well for me and for the woman
I know so few of them by name.

25 March 2010

CONTRASTS

after Bartók

And all the things I know
are just contrasts with
other things I think I know

and how would I know one
without the other

knowledge is pure edge,
to know the rims of things

the overlays and do they
as two sounds float upon a third
and their differences
suddenly become.

25 March 2010

ANNUNCIATION

after Carlo Crivelli

Where the word finds her reading
kneeling at her desk but reading
what could the girl be reading
with her long hair idle in the light

a word comes through the wall and finds her reading
a word leaps up from the book she finds herself reading
there is no randomness in reading
a book is always waiting for her sight

always knows when she'll be wanting to be reading
always slipping into her hands when she goes reading
spreading itself wide to the very page she should be reading
and there the word is that changes her inside.

25 March 2010

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The day comes in at dusk
by night it remembers
all the other rain it used to speak

Water is always new, since new
means we have seen this before
and then forgot and now it's changed

New means change. The day
ends with a dry sky
but on the mountains there's still snow

a form of water they did not know
who called this day Rain.

In those mountains also though

live people for whom the day has no name.

26 March 2010

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Something chewing on the roof
or at the root

floor or house wall
how can I tell

everything is trying to come in
always or get out

walls are what we work on
all life long

I think of Valéry's tranquil
rooftop where the white doves peck

and I am that roof now
everything is a gentle bird

pries at me with gentle
insistent firm little beak

meantime the noise has stopped.
Sunlight is trying to be quiet too.

27 March 2010

97.

They made me do it of course
open the afternoon and squeeze some morning in

to trick the pretty people into thinking
all these oldish amplitudes were young again

word after word and they in their time danced you
deep into dancing whatever dance may really mean

people who live in mirrors learn to throw stones
that is the music's upright body curved

the wall you lean against belongs to you
because the whole business is built to our purpose

you are the measure of all things
you are the mass and meaning of the world

don't let scribes with abacuses fool you
everything in this garden is here for you

some to eat and some to touch and some leave untasted
the mystery of Friday in Thursday afternoon

because time is patterned on our measure too
our time the unwise trees had to learn

the stars will not cease their realignments
until they match the speed of time itself our time

so we can see them dancing in our own senses
read like simple children the words they spell

all the alphabets of light spilled on the night
he said and reached out his clean hand pointing past me.

28 March 2010

98.

I'm always quoting from the inside of something
radical pirouettes of politicians leave me cold

give me red wind-chapped knees of hockey players
under the tartan skirts of private schools

that's the America for me pink symbols striving
with glad cries on the fields of money

let them keep what they have and start again
there must be something good about poverty

look how many people choose to be poor
go to dumb movies listen to canned trash

we too have listened to the Sabbath bell
but smiled and dozed and woke softly late

he said and looked at me too smiling for my taste
asked if I were rich enough yet to be alone

what are they jabbering about their foreigners
with alphabets that look like snakes or stars

their shrill conversations must be conspiracies
music plotting terror acts against meaning

everything they say sounds like poetry
incomprehensible and rash a madman clutching your lapels

we're in dangerous waters now
he said a sea of things

things have meanings too I answered
not just words I said.

28 March 2010