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Curses in alleys
turn blessings on boulevards.
And why? The blind
street-singer in the empty
square in sunlight.
The whole city silent
except for his voice.
Who knows what
blind men see?

28 August 2010

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Who knows the weird forgiveness of the dark?

The legate of the distant Emperor inspects the lake

wanting it to be more than water, the wind to be

more than any air, the earth more than a house.

The legate has been educated to expect

things to bend to the imperial will. The moon

gives too little light, the sun much too much—

everything else belongs to human politics.

28 August 2010

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I am near the gate
but don't go through.
This recalcitrance
(dragging the heels) is
a lifelong occupation.
No wonder women
write books and men
read them, there must
be some way of knowing
what we think, we
who just like me dither
at every threshold
too dark, too light—
thousands of years.

28 August 2010

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The roses of beginning
and the rose of Sharon
of now—you'll
understand me, E,

you who walked so many
miles through time
alone, ardent witness
of what now brings.

29 August 2010

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So someone sitting in the house does rule the world—
it happens simple as that—sunshine, snow,
rain, the whole encyclopedia of whatever just happens.

Awareness is control. The barriers crumbled
long ago, the empty boulevards stretch out far
as the Moon Gate at the city's edge. See it.

Grasp it. You are the barbarian who writes it all down.

29 August 2010

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When a child all by himself
learns to sit still
the angels all through the universe
shout joy and praise and relief—
the Redeemer is almost here!

29 August 2010

or, simply, a child sitting quietly, alertly, still, is the holiest being in nature

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What happens to the hollow
when the rain falls in.
Things change. But never
the feel of their form.

Whatever lasts feels like food
for some other person
more or less than human
but kindly, quiet, far.

We also live by form.
Hot need and quiet
policy to feed upon
whatever passes by.

29 August 2010

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Writing into the green
each blade a stroke
the lawn a palimpsest

for real—everybody
wrote this. A field
forty years ago
a forest now, small,
crowding up to the light.

I think we learned from everything,
I think there is no place not inscribed,
masterstrokes of human will
fragments of the message.

From no one to no one
by way of you.

30 August 2010

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Nothing to catch hold of now—
a breeze, cool night very hot day.
It is to be in a place
until it lets you go.
More than we know
we belong to the weather.

30 August 2010

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How to be austere
and still fill up the page.
The Irish know—the bleak
object-oriented love of theirs
makes every word equivalent,
every story bitter sugar
tells the same: listen to me,
it says, listen to me or I die,
then you'll be alone with yourself
one more broken little island
ink-stained fingers pale cold flanks.

30 August 2010

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The swash of identity
so evident so dear
I know each of these people,
every one, whether they
fascinate me with their clothes
their welcoming yesses
their scared but withering
noes—they all are mine
by virtue of my city, they
are mine, almost me.

Spring Street Revelation
eating sugarfree butter pecan,
a cone, beside Charlotte
eating chocolate, chairs
so sidewalk modest,
so many pass our folding
chairs and I am all of them.

30 August 2010, NYC

GLIMPSES

Always be near the other.

Wild man.

The love that falls

fell on the overweening—

quotations from the obvious,

a glass.

A glass of.

What

do you mean by wild.

There is a caravan that goes through the desert

scholars bent over their books

rubbing their eyes to get out the sand.

2.

Park in the wrong place

your life changes.

mKha'-spyod. Who is it (and how)

enjoys the sky?

Inhabits its intelligence,

boundless, undistracted

by any random objects.

3.

One calf Vivien Leigh

one some other babe.

The legs' woman passed

too quick down subway steps

for us to read.

The pictures vanished first.

A young woman

with the faces of two

handsome actresses

tattooed on her legs,

why, why.

All night I'll try to figure it out.

And wonder what other faces she has chosen

to smile from her skin, and where.

And why.

30 August 2010

NYC

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Lagoon side. Aspect
where in daylight swans.
Coasting unseen
by the autumn mallow
saucer pink. *Malva*
becomes French *mauve*
Steiner's holy color—
the light inside our
bodies shimmers thus,
all colors exalted
in this.

As in a man's or
woman's face the whole
universe is specified.

30 August 2010,
Metro North

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Empty in the presence of God.

A chalice. He is there

already. The wine

is for us, the bread.

30 August 2010

Metro North

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Oracle of the bird.

Nuthatch. Woodpecker family.

Approaches target upside down.

Black-capped. A little rebbe

walking head down. "Why don't men

see God anymore in these days?"

"Because they never look down."

How to do it. Invert everything.

Turn the process upside down,

find the stars in the stagnant pool.

Gay Science. Black and white.

Walk down my tree.

(Any bird is an ambiguity.)

31 August 2010

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Just call and say no
if you can't say yes.

The burden of beauty
weighs on both of us

of course in obviously
different ways.

The French say "you
must suffer to be

beautiful" so pick
up the phone and call,

you bitch my god.

31 August 2010

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What happens when the curtain of the body's lifted?
This blood is a word being spoken, spirit lives in it
half-oxygen half-soul. The rest of me's a shoreline
for its unrelenting flow. The ones who made the body
may not be strong enough to keep it from decay—
or do they know better?—the blacksmith
builds his iron fence but can't keep the rust away.
Time tells a different story from the one we want to hear.
So want a different thing. Or give up wanting,
cruise through the morning feeding on sunbeams, cries
of sparrows, faithfully holding nothing at all in mind.
There is a logic in what I'm saying here, find it if you can
or care, but better yet (as Spicer says) "believe the birds."

31 August 2010

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Green tea for givenness
isinglass window old
stove fish glue on my shoe
held sole to body.
Things tend to come loose.
The last, the shell
our tender shape requires—
sympathy is so hard,
we renew the places
where once we were sought,
found or not found,
the smell of that rock
thrills us still, identity
rediscovered on the desert's edge—
it will be hot today.
Time to read another woman's book.

31 August 2010

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The sutures binding belief—
what strange notions
are in this Chinese fountain pen
(Darjeeling, 1983, ten rupees)
the violet ink releases.
We are weird people
and we need weird things
to help us say our minds.
Not mine. I have
nothing to do with all this.
I just write it down.

31 August 2010

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Writers just write down what they're told,
listening, asking no questions,
just writing it down as it comes.
And so it happens that some writers
are like Saint John on Patmos or like Hölderlin
and others are like Eichmann just doing
his job, regardless of the consequences of what 'they' write.

31 August 2010

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1.

Always another pen to fill
notebook to fill
hill to climb up
all for the hard work of climbing down.

2.

To leave what I have written
is so hard.
But better leaving than believing it.

31 August 2010

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Mornings on the sun deck
evenings in the summerhouse—
you'd think I was made of space!
(In exclamations of that sort
the subjunctive is not usually employed.)

31 August 2010

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Fearless sparrow at my feet.
Under the deck a fat woodchuck
comes back to her refuge
having eaten the offering cookies thrown.
To be part of the world again
eternal, but so brief.

31 August 2010

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Forest closing kindly
around the house
the green protector's
arms around us.

How thick the woods
have grown, and close
since I moved in
four decades back.

Welcome, trees,
I pray you continuance,
shelter for this
halfway hermitage.

31 August 2010