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Things again
as if I were born
to set them free

not as objects
of poetic inquiry
or signs in our own

endless traffic
but themselves
as themselves

agents in their own
world acting
also on me

and thee, thrusting
us forward
as if we too

were as real as they.

1 February 2009

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Naturally said the doctor
things come back.
As long as you have skin
it will keep trying to talk
tell you what's inside
where the cannibal demons
and pretty princesses contend
all day long among your bones
and dream your hormones through
the droning liturgy of night.

1 February 2009

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Why change a light bulb
when you can close your eyes?

Psychic surgeons prowl the jungle
waiting for your anxieties.

They will bring them home to you
slit you open and set them in,

old typewriter ribbons dry and dirty
spooling lost words through your will.

You can't read a single one but
you hear their spindles creak.

1 February 2009

POLSTERGEISTS

are the afreets who live in easy chairs
wheezing beneath you when you sit down.
They make you drowsy, lose your place
in what you're reading, make you nap.

1.II.09

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Homecoming alas. Too long
out of state. Expired
license. Ordinary poetry.

This is your tragedy—
compartmented, lyric
here, euro there. A big

dissertation upon forgetting.

Why don't you listen to your skin?

1 February 2009

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It doesn't have to be everything said.
Some of it could have been imagined,
like the picture ten feet long all wet
rolled up to squeeze it dry – how
can that be – but no one nearby
was satisfied with the station life
had placed him in. Despondent
executives thinking about snow.
I told them a few lies to cheer them up
because they are the only things I know.

1 February 2009

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When I saw her thighs
I suddenly knew how to write Arabic
and wrote a couplet on them
one line on each leg about
gardens and walls and roses.
And on her belly what I knew
turned into Persian, more words
about waiting and wanting and heaven.

1 February 2009

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Small considerations
endless as a dream.

1.II.09

ARBOR VITAE

For a runner who ran hurdles in high school
I think somehow there are ten hurdles
and ten yards between one hurdle and the next
and these ten hurdles are the ten sephiroth
on the Tree of Life – not the tree-of-life tree
in front of my house I planted many years ago
and that this winter for the first time the deer
starving in all this snow started eating and now
only the conical top beyond their teeth is left
strange spindle shape of our hard winter
I mean the spheres of the First Tree itself
its roots in the sky and its branches among us
and its fruits are us. She heaps over each hurdle
and the tree gets brighter. Who is she
that she is able to do this? How did she come
to run so fast, faster than wisdom, faster
than beauty or the moon beneath her? This
is no squirrel up Yggdrasil this is a human
leaping over the Sunday afternoon cold mist
over the spheres of understanding and war,
she runs the chemicals of the electric tree
and her spine knows more than she does
while she runs, while she runs there is only
this next human will or godland mystery to

jump over on her way to the ending the quiet
blank and blameless house where the mind
has been living all the while she ran. And why
did she run? She ran to keep it running.
The poor deer are so hungry. The lights
the ten lights in the tree are so hungry for me.

1 February 2009

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Or did I have enough
to ask for more?
Rocks are like that—
the slow empire
stretching out
beneath the grass
until everything stops
and we are where we are.

Hopelessly happy – you know,
you have seen it in my face.
And I sometimes in yours.
Listen, we keep saying
to each other, listen,
as if there were something to hear,
maybe if you listen hard
you'd hear me listening

or faintly the slipping
sliding together and the fall
of cards some people we'll
never know are playing far away.

2 February 2009

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Aligning the obvious
halter and a little wind
the snow is riding.

Show me who you really are—
only the skin bears
true report. Herodotus

in his sandy bivouac
memorizes names of kings
and industrious deities

they are the same
names of hindering
potentates of fire

the hamsin breath of desert
but all the while he's writing
with his ordinary hand

breathing through his ordinary lips—
do you see how important
this, that the bravest things

are shadows on the skin
and we amble with them, weary
writer and weary reader

at book's end both rub their eyes?
We are skin. Surfaces
of intimate understanding

wrapped around an alien dark.

3 February 2009

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What's all this
about the other?
This flower is me.

3.II.09

TELLING

Cautiously, in semaphore,
like a boy on a cliff
at midnight signaling
far out to the empty sea.

3 February 2009

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We understand this used to be
someone else. Then it got to be me.
After a while it will weary or relent
then migrate, to you, whoever you are.
But which me, which you? Ah,
the dance is a dark dance, no way
to see who goes so slow with you
or whirls me round. Come up
with answers the way people do
at parties, get nervous and start gobbling
canapés, jabber with their mouths full
unclear, unsatisfied, very fast.

3 February 2009

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*Fromm sind wir Liebende, still
verehren wir alle Dämonen*

—Goethe, Roman Elegies, 4.

Who can that be in the night
who looked in at me
from her car to my car and we went?

A face to make miles from
and remember.

The light the little light there was
seemed to come from her skin not onto it,

a face made of shadow and a little light
a face made of me seeing it.

3 February 2009

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It is a kind of spider
who spins the sweetest webs
that catch light, and dew,
and light glistens in the dew
and the liberal geometry
of design shines a little
in the morning breeze
if anyone were ever
there to look at it.

And what we dare to face
looks in at us
from the core of the mirror—
the blackened part behind the glaze
that lets mere glass show us our faces.
Or something like our faces.

3 February 2009

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How much light
we have to take away
so a thing can be
the color of itself

how dangerous
a self is, a mezzo
soprano singing
soft in the woods at dusk

and again you listen.

4 February 2009

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From the corner of my eye
I caught that music
sunray caressing snow

4 February 2009

ETUDE

An étude is as fat as any
and as far—
we hear only in the moment
who are we
to count the moment left to go?

4 February 2009