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*(A Brief Organon of the Art)*

I want an old word  
with new seat covers such  
that when I pick up  
fascinating hitchhikers  
they'll feel at ease  
able to mean with me  
along the road I mean  
to stretch out forever  
till we're finally home.

\*

I want a new word  
around my bones  
a rock to sit on  
and a bird to watch  
a chunk of bread  
to share with all my me's.

\*

I want an unword  
still not breathed in  
by any human mouth  
let alone out

I want to hear it  
makes its way  
through flesh and blood  
and yammer in me  
till I shout.

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*Instructions: From these texts extract “I” and “me” and “my”, replace them with the space between your ears and your eyes. Then do it again, and see.*

26 April 2009

## **IF ONLY THEY KNEW**

Death's not a hunk or a harlot  
hustling towards you. Death  
is a tiny hole in a big bag of flour  
you're carrying on your shoulder.  
Ants follow to see if you ever  
get home. And what you eat there.

What you are  
slips away  
grain by grain

Who knows what will be left  
to make the fine loaf of bread  
you've been planning all your life?

26 April 2009

= = = = =

Minnesota can get very hot.

Music punishes listening.

Toccatà for skin, the thin  
thing in the ear is called a drum.

Recreational religion  
makes you old. Slap. Slap.

At least you know there's someone there.

26 April 2009

= = = = =

I am a four  
legged bird  
with no wings  
I gleam

in the rain  
I wake  
but never leave  
my dream.

27 April 2009

= = = = =

*Well, Mr Bone, what new language will you learn today?*

—It's a toss-up between Bloodish and Meat – I'll probably go for the heat, I always do.

*But I expect you'd do better with Meat—big house, comfortable lawn, nice lap, long mornings in bed. . .*

—True, but there's a kind of noise I keep hearing in the blood, a kind of Engels on the march, savvy and well-meaning and hot—I want that music.

27 April 2009

= = = = =

You should never finish a play. Leave before the last act. A play always finishes itself. The mind of the viewer is the best *theatrum* – solid walls and pretty customers inside. The mind. Who needs actors? You have shadows to do your work, the shadows of words cast on the audience's mind. Leave them to it, let the words feast on the audience. Hawks, hawks and crows. And vultures after.

27 April 2009

= = = = =

Where are the little wolves?  
By the rock where fountains spill  
into the pond. Where little fish  
called crimson whippers flit  
you'd think mindlessly through the shallow  
but you'd be wrong, wrong,  
nature makes no mistakes,  
not even you. Your wrongness too  
has something right about it  
the way a heap of rocks has snakes.  
Near water, little fish, tadpoles,  
a robin loud-welcoming the gloaming.  
Not wolves, they're foxes.  
On the prowl for chickens  
but there are none here. Just fish  
and the goats next door. Whose people  
make cheese and sit on the verandah  
reading about the history of Africa.

27 April 2009

= = = = =

Can a thing  
have history?  
Time has not  
much traffic  
with a thing—

but maybe there's  
another kind of history  
that's outside time,

a sly investigation  
sideways into the seeming?

So it is time for the mirror,  
already I can hear  
the glass sing over the shallow basin.

27 April 2009

= = = = =

Grammar's all that we have left to break—  
but when it's broken it's just new grammar,  
hydra-happy, it says anything we please.

27.IV.09

= = = = =

Why I am I  
and not another—  
but am I really?

How do I know  
that Otherdom  
hasn't conquered in the night?

Are the sun-dappled leaf shadows  
on the lawn coordinates  
of accustomed identity?

Who are they kidding?  
The rose has little leaves—  
simple words familiar

but somehow not like me.

I am many-syllabled  
I am hard to read—

can this simple thing be me?

27 April 2009

= = = = =

But it is a kind of caring  
flowers falling from a hand  
no further than the sky

close, alstroemeria, those pale  
pink and white Peruvian lilies  
that have no scent—

flowers just for the eye  
for an age when we have not yet  
even begun to look.

27 April 2009

## MEDIAEVAL SCENES

*A set of poems in homage to the great poets of Romance, the loving that is knowing, Charles Williams and Robert Duncan – though the latter loved not the former. It is brought to mind this late April 2009 by an essay by Maeve Carver on the lais of Marie de France.*

A blessing should be part of shower—  
a car needs a house to live too  
the antlers are ventures, the deer  
is a female though, and white, and white  
the star that blazes vaguely near her head—

he saw and followed through the pre-dawn streets, close  
as you'll ever come to a forest, magic.  
Your shadow is the only boat that bears you.

\*

Heed too the hart says  
not every angel is your woman.  
Leaves, count the leaves.  
You heard their voices, follow  
you must follow every voice you hear,  
it says so in the leaves.

\*

Hear Mass on horseback, half heathen.  
Then you'll get a taste  
of what the working angels feel,  
always an animal beneath you,  
less or more reliable, you can smell her,  
o high and fine to be a knight  
of such a horse, a hearer  
of such a Mass, a man.

The crow said no more,  
the knight, faint with understanding, wept.

\*

There is no flat country in this country.  
Hills are trying to be people  
or people who decided to be rock.  
Too long ago to tell. What we know—  
where a hill lifts up a voice comes down,  
someone walks in the shadows,  
strange stone leper chapels hunker in the dell.

\*

Six lepers drank from this well,  
six crows watched them doing so.

Numbers have just been born,  
nobody knows yet what they're for.

\*

Knight might. Lady maybe.  
Pavilion pyght.  
Past tense of woo.  
A wooden candlestick,  
a tallow candle  
but a golden flame.

*Wake, she sounded, wake from this dream  
you call the real world, she sang,  
the young woman sang, her mind  
on something else, wake and see.*

\*

The witch night comes them soon—  
that is the night when more  
trees have leaves than not  
and spider walk outside to take the air,  
the special air that lives in shadow,  
the air that feeds.

The witches

have had all winter to be young  
and now they gleam. There is something  
silky about time, the way it slips past,  
there is something winter about summer  
the other says, a little fear left in the heart.  
And the youngest witch of all said  
That fear is my religion – with it  
never stilled, I can know everything.  
The world itself is fear, and my own  
small fear is big enough to make me Lady of it.

\*

At last leaf shadows  
skate across the words.

I must be ready.  
It must be spring,  
the deal is made.

Hermit, eye-lidded,  
book heavy, rock quiet—  
have I spent so many tears  
learning to see so little?

\*

In the subway you're closer to it,  
the roar does it, the roaring dark,  
the dark quickness, the dreamlike  
substitution of one place for another

they even call them 'station' just  
as in the tract on mystical ascensions  
the imam made you read  
and bring back to your rabbi  
to show your priest.

Chambers Street

who lives in them, Canal Street  
swim the thick air, West Fourteenth,  
different religions, all the mistakes  
you have chosen, the lies you live to lead.

You are a convert to Love. You need  
a lover at every station. Or the lover's  
house in not too far, climb up the street,  
find the door, climb the stairs,  
don't stop at the sky.

\*

Every New Yorker knows the Middle Ages  
we do it by the nature of social interaction  
not by architecture or old masonry, not  
by animals or drinking in the street  
and lying down to sleep, not by the wolves  
that slip across the East River ice from Brooklyn  
and feed on hopes and horrors over here.  
No. New York is mediaeval just because

the Middle Ages meant: Everything matters.  
Everything is magic. Everything can kill you  
but I can love you back to life and spin  
mild spells by which all of a sudden you  
understand the tongues of passing cars,  
pigeon grammar and the long slow song  
of what the shadows of tall buildings say  
racing from the unrelenting sun.

\*

This boat you ride a beast  
this shadow is your own  
that's what you follow with your beak

the sun always at your back  
till you come to the origin of the world,  
another boat, this time not a shadow

but something hollow, *strangely docked*  
where no man expected to find water.

\*

So draw your sword  
and listen with the tip of it  
gently trembling, you will hear  
up the highways of your arm  
what the forest says:  
taxis sloping north on Sixth  
an avenue whose name is never said.  
We live in mystery  
and no way out.  
And that teaches the youngest knight  
when to be silent. And when to be silent

\*

But they came and fell from the tree when she spoke  
those silver apples he tried to hard to catch  
and got only one but that one was enough

one is always enough

that's what the hermit said, the old man he'd seen eating rocks for bread

\*

Are you ready for me now  
he cried into the woods  
are you the woman that the deer said  
would meet me and change me

and all my life would be a golden candlestick  
burning a black flame beside her  
which only she of all the world could see

\*

Inside her, that's what the deer meant,  
you must be a flame in her  
and all your own brightness and desire  
no more than a quick taste in her mouth  
before she bends down and drinks from the fountain  
and just after.

\*

Then he was in the dark

and liked it. The fear  
was fun. The winds  
he waited for were messages.  
A few drops of his own blood  
on the snow. No snow.

\*

Never sure if what he feared  
was what he thought about  
all those nights trying to wake out.  
A mouth with teeth. Teeth  
without a mouth. Arms  
around him, bearing him down  
into what he wanted.

Is that what he wanted?  
The trees said only what the wind  
wanted. He wanted to be like that too,  
accurate in response  
as a branch broken by the wind  
falls. *I am obedient, a shadow—  
but who will be my light?*

\*

But with nothing ready the maiden

Or late the animal he thought

At first he was a horse  
then she saw he was a priest. Lancelet  
saying Mass on hands and knees.

Here was the problem. He had come  
to the center of the world  
and found it full.

Thronged with the passionate devotions  
of some other  
the place was,  
he was civil, or not civil, just polite,  
he had no city yet  
but he was smooth, said  
May I be an other in your otherness?

No man can say my Mass  
the other answered,  
only my own tears can fill this chalice  
only my body be this bread.

\*

That's what subways are for—  
to get to the city, and what's more  
get to the center and get away again  
smooth as only dragon engines can  
who sleep all day while they run  
the way the sky sleeps around the sun.

But no sun here.  
The dark was kindly, the dark was old,  
it had been like a father to him all his life,  
mother used too many words but this  
old darkness just said this. This. This.

\*

He had been there and come back—  
he felt like some dumb novel

you leave on the train and never know,

but he knew. The deer had told him clearly—  
you will find her and you will find pain,  
the pain with the shape of her body  
the look of her eyes you won't stop seeing  
even when you imagine other faces,  
hers loom at you out of your precious dark.

\*

To now someone  
is to be seared  
in your soul.  
Knowledge is a wound  
from which you won't dare die,

she said, he ran from her  
into the shadow of her he had imagined.

\*

Is the camera ready  
do I have the knife  
the bread, the silver  
artichoke the king's  
artificer made for me  
to probe 'the variable  
vulnerability of beauty'  
he said, 'give this vegetable  
which alas is a flower  
to the one who hurts you best.'

\*

And why are my shoes  
not on my feet  
and why has the road  
been rolled up in the night  
like the moon behind cloud  
and nowhere to go  
and no way to get there  
and my horse is dead?

\*

He never had a house  
he had a hole.  
He had a house  
and crept inside.  
From room to room he went  
and said This is my pilgrimage.  
This kitchen table is Jerusalem  
enough, and on it a Sufficient Cup.

\*

Did she wake him from satisfaction?  
The arrow long ago he shot  
at her came back and wounded him.  
This knowledge made him bleed,  
we can trace his passage through  
the house of the story, the quiet  
night-time forest of the bedroom,  
the meadow, the snow, by marking  
where the little drops of blood  
marked out his stations.

The problem is to tell.  
To find a ship in the core of the woods

and sail away.  
To declare yourself an island  
against all reason and politesse  
become a city on an island  
when the ship has turned into the sea.

\*

It was a wound he found  
in the middle of the world  
a mouth that doesn't speak—

and even if it did, even  
with his sword and shield  
he could not survive a single

word that mouth might speak.

\*

Silently riding home  
where the subway leaves the ground  
and runs on elevated tracks  
over the harbor part of town  
he wondered what he would tell  
of what he thought he'd seen,

the bright teeth of the silent wound,  
it would hurt people if he told  
just as it hurt him to see and not understand.

But he must tell.  
So he would say: there was this dream  
I went into the woods  
saw a wild animal  
saw a woman and now I'm home.

But he wasn't home.  
And the road had come back.  
As it always does. And a deer  
far ahead, looking back over her withers at him.

28-29 April 2009

= = = = =

*C'est l'heure du loup-garou,  
Et le mari dort au coin de son feu;  
La lune rit sans bruit dans le beau soir bleu;*

—Tristan Klingsor

It is the werewolf hour  
and the goodman drowns by his fire  
the moon laughs without a sound...

29 April 2009

= = = = =

*A different tone now  
needed friends  
to lift a pleasanter  
face to heaven  
and join our meanings  
in one joy*

but what is that,  
this joy that sounds like boy  
like toy like something small  
you carry in your heart  
because not far from the hand?

Children are said to show it—  
*joyful faces of the children*  
we find written,  
they show it but they don't know it

because to speak of joy  
is always to be across the street from it  
outside the window from it  
hoping down the winter street—

joy *is* joy because its mind's on someone else.

30 April 2009

= = = = =

Was she helpful?

Did she fill your eyes with tears?

Did the knacker down the block

kill your old horse?

Is anything natural?

30 April 2009

= = = = =

Who had your face before you did?

*Blaue Augen* don't mean blue eyes

like you think, mean *Sighing Eyes*

the way you look at me I wish.

30 April 2009

## WALPURGISNACHT

my hundred thousandth on this  
earth this night this very  
I am what I thought last time I was  
and now I am

                  this night we worship  
the powers that make us be  
and believe and forget and come again  
our bodies rammed endless together

heart too is a tusk digs in.

30 April 2009