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On the day Nine-Rain
things are seldom obvious.
It did rain, the wind
blew down many pine cones,
toppled a flowerpot,
slammed the gate closed
opened it time after time.

Did anyone come in?
She Nine arrive on Her day
glistening with rain?
Her hands are not hard
but they are slippery,
hard to hold. Wild
turkeys strut in from the woods.

10 May 2009

TEACHING

Holy Elizabeth pray for me, for you are pale with foreknowledge.

Holy Christian pray for me, for your feet have touched the earth.

Holy Aviv pray for me, for you have heard the lone prisoner sighing in his
cell beneath the ground.

Holy Ashley pray for me, for you have leapt from the city wall into the
scream of battle.

Holy Nathan pray for me, for language never sleeps.

Holy Ava pray for me, for always going further away.

Holy Rebecca pray for me, for children hide behind garages in the flowering
place where silence is born.

*

Religion is the strangest love of all. Religion is children making shapes in
wet sand —diagrams, words, images— that last till the tide comes in.

Walking into a classroom is, for a teacher, like walking into the Great
Temple, into the presence of the Gods.

*

Though I've been teaching classes for five decades, that is why I'm still
nervous, anxious, almost desperate when I walk through the door. But not
afraid, not exactly afraid.

And I have no liturgy but what I make up.

But when I say “make up” I should really be saying: my liturgy is what they put into my mouth,

when I look up from the text in question, and look at them,

my liturgy is what they make me say.

10 May 2009

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Get rid of the dream
before you begin the day.
But how to get rid of it
and where does it go?

I asked a soldier
he pointed over the hill
asked a sailorman
pointed down below

nobody knows, a priest
pointed east, a little dog
leapt into the air
tried to lick my hand

a bird levanting left
a feather on the road
a sort of answer
there's always something

left when everything is gone.

11 May 2009

[Commentary]

Of course the question —where does the dream go?— was not answered. It may be a meaningless question —there is no ‘where’ or ‘whence’ or ‘whither’ for mental events— if we even can call a dream mental, that begs another question, doesn’t it, we don’t even know where the dream *is*—and if we can call it an event, ditto, nothing happens. Everything just seems. We’re in it more than it’s in us. It seems.

Come on, what kind of answer does any question get? Two plus two makes four is true if and only if the items being counted are purely notional, or, if actual, they continue to behave as discrete unities (what a dream!) and don’t start turning into one another, or cease being themselves. Two beads of mercury plus two beads of mercury equal one bead of mercury. The wall falls away from under the egg. On a whirling planet, what else would you expect? Contrary to common sense, we don’t fly off into the sky. And we don’t even really know how we (we!) keep our sky, our sweet blue atmosphere itself from being slung all at once into yawny space.

11 May 2009

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Answerable needs. A father?
A lost emerald? A fountain
clotted with pennies, some of them
big bronze circles from Victoria's time—
who would name his daughter,
who must I be if my daughter's name
is Verity, Faith, Honor? Am i
a whirlwind looking for a quiet room?
To bask in moveless dust
among the sun motes streaming?
Or can anything choose to fly?
A matter of will or temperament,
acts of faith, acts of God,
ambulances rushing past the house
at dawn with all the dying and
please god don't stop here?
Just will. And grace abounding
upward from the earth itself.
Thrust. And close the door.
And speak no more names.

11 May 2009

RAINBOW

She says she is a rainbow
already or her body is.
She says that I must look close
to see her skin and if I do
I will see beyond the Milky Way
dark fountains from which
all human colors come. That
is what she's saying to me
with all our pine trees our
milpas full of maize, red
bananas stubby fat and sweet
and greeny crocodiles
in bluebrown rivers—
these are human colors
and each one of them
is to be counted on her skin
whole or damaged, licked
or left alone, coming
towards me or beside me
sleeping the long dream
of friendship or running
into the little woods around
our modest housing,
the magic forest of Broceliande
where human colors turn

into living creatures and above
them all the huge bald eagle
we saw last night patrolling
high the unresisting sky
against the last light a bird
no color at all. Beyond
human colors are the actual
she says, rainbow she says,
and that too you can find in me.

11 May 2009

IN JUDEA

I don't want to be weird,
it just can't help me.

She spells her name with an aleph
but that's wrong, should be ayn,
an eye, an eye in the ground,
in the desert, a well,
water that looks at the sky.

I can only help her by spelling
her correctly, she helps me
do this by taking off her clothes.

The skin smiles the way
nobody else can. At evening
we go down to the well
where the water looks at her too.

11 May 2009

RESPONSA

Apart from me
have you ever known me?

Is there also
a wall inside the door?

Is that yesterday nestled inside
tomorrow the same as now
or someone else?

If it rhymes
isn't it probably wrong?

Or useless?

(Sticks and stones *may* break your bones
but names will always hurt you.)

What a waste of music language is!

What a waste of language music is!

If the evidence itself is not evident,
what do we make of notions like 'rain' or 'moon' or 'now'?

What is lost by speaking?

Not the meanings of words, but their keenness.

The dull is always wrong.

The opposite of wrong, is it entertaining?

There is a land without a single syllogism
yet the moon is just as bright
midmonth as here. There are rocks
without a single explanation
yet you can sit on them. Or they hold down
a corner of your treasure map,
it flutters in the wind.

Two wonders:

the amazement of the infidel, the patience of God.

12 May 2009

HISTORY

Yesterday a man came to our town
and recited in one hour the entire
history of the world or at least
the human role in all that time.

I did not go hear him. Instead, lazy,
I sat home and gazed into a mirror,
a little hand-mirror such as Venus uses
to remind herself of who men think she is.

12 May 2009

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If what you say has top-spin
it goes beyond the question.
Otherwise it lies on the grass
like a tossed flower, of value
only in that it was once reverently
offered. Pretty enough still,
no future, pure color of now.

12 May 2009

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Vowels loosed

to share *nous*

between voice's

use

wood tube

sum to each

other open

huge space

to give

new

language no

curse of meaning

on it so

thousands of lives

knew!

rose shout

her mouth or from

soon sung sunrise

all night long.

12 May 2009

JUMP CUT

Be a guide. Epic is poem.

Epic must be poem cannot
be fiction film confession
must be poem because line

versus, because the words
turn, reach a certain hidden point
and turn back

the hidden point is the same as God
is the silence at the end of lines
the dark where we begin again

epic must be in lines
because the essence of what it tells
is discontinuous,

narration as an art is discontinuity.

Narration knows: you can't tell every single thing,
you can't even know them, all.

Which things to skip, which footsteps in the journey
take for granted,

let silence work, let the line
come to an end and when it begin again
the hero's there, where he needs to be,
in the act.

The Deed ever begins again.

Im Anfang war die Tat!

What happens is not what happens.

What happens is this:

every necessary discontinuity, skipped-over tween step, every gap
between what we need to know and what we need to know
is subsumed with, given momentary fragmentary *dignity* by,
its fleeting apparition in and as a *line*,
in the ongoing discontinuity of, singing the word.

13 May 2009

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Let me be narrative
something to leap

over something else—
wind in the hedge
a little shelter but not much

it's strange always to be a child
and no one knows you

to endure the systematic imposture
of your own personality

—why did I put on these masks and not some others?

Was I ever free
to choose?

And if I ever was am I not still?
Who's asking, even?

There's a moment in the day for personal oddity,
we don't always have to be on deck, captain's cap
firmly in place and a dumb wind blowing.
A moment to encounter my own eccentricity

and look on it and know that it is good.
Or good enough for me to live another day
in the radiant perversity of this world,
thronged with exceptions and never a rule in sight.
Though rules exist, and Science, that slut
of the appearances, works to find them out
then works to ignore what she has found
so the rest of us can go on sleeping
safe in the crannies of our differences
so precious so ridiculous so lame.

13 May 2009

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Sometimes it happens without a number—
appetites radiate from the object once perceived
never forgotten. Eating mango on her bench.
Specks of sunlight make the window dirty—
remember the next time you go swimming
the ocean has been everywhere touched everything
before it got around to touching you.
But I find lakes mysterious, snaky, busy
with too many locked in memories, a lake
is all nostalgia and snapping turtles, people
who live their lives by lakes go weird,
nowhere to get rid of their mistaken thoughts,
their fatalities of feeling. Everything stays.
And the phantoms who hover over lakes
at evening, hard to trust them, they always
listen and never answer. As the sea does
by always coming in. Or the river
does by endlessly going away.

13 May 2009

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The clouds are my children,
my mothers. Who am I
to tell the difference?

They come and speak above me—
for weeks they have been telling,

palimpsests, old manuscripts of air
and moisture, impasto urgencies
of writing outside time

I bend down into my dark particulars
to understand what they pour down.
Lifelines. Sadhana. The long
pattern of what each one lives.
Is born to do.

14 May 2009

THERE

Walking there
by cloud
and crow call guided

who can tell me
what that place is
don't you already know?

14 May 2009