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Speedreading poetry.

Chinese shorthand.

A priori must be  
based on sounds a-  
lone.

in Mandarin  
a few hundred syllables  
plus four tones

say all the hundred thousand words.

Just write the syllable,  
hear it onto the paper.

Everything  
might be easier than we think.

Anything is easier than thinking.

15 August 2009

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joggers and such—  
if it takes them so much time  
to be healthy,  
what will they do when they're sick?

15.VIII.09.

## UNKNOWN COUNTRY

The cool of the day  
aligns itself with Spain  
it said in my head  
and I don't know why

rose of Sharon at my left  
black-eyed Susan right  
pink and yellow and who knows why  
and Spain is not my country

never was, but is a single syllable  
could that be why  
the sky is blue, I could have said France  
but not Peru, does the world

come tumbling out of its names,  
maybe I should have said Greece,  
there are so few, some aestheto-political  
agenda must be in play here too,

something the words are telling me  
about how the world actually is—  
a cruel country on a pretty day,  
a single syllable floating in the sky?

No flowers in the sickroom we heard  
they take the patient's breath away.  
Oxygen exchange. Slave trade.  
Port of Spain. It has to be, and I'm

at sea again afloat on my desires'  
sweet clarity, safe from each other  
today people sealed in airconditioned cars  
little Ahabs scoffing at the sun.

*El aire de Madrid es tan sutil*  
*que mata a un hombre y no apaga a un candil*  
Gaddis put that in my head fifty years ago  
in one of the 700 copies of the book got sold

or did he — *tan sutil* — make it up himself  
among all the other forgeries? The years  
are impostors. Such a cruel country,  
I like the way they use prepositions

to lead up to a direct object: kill to a man  
but not blow out to a candle, Spain, Spain,  
you upside-down question stuck in my head,  
all the dead alchemists and missing Jews,

the murdered Moors, cruel as we are,  
the cool of every evening aligns itself  
with ancient cruelty, Maybe I mean that.  
I've spent my life saying what comes to mind.

15 August 2009

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Because the wind is blowing in my eyes  
I see summer. What else could I be  
but one with my hands on the weather  
feeling up the sky.

It is the nature  
of nature  
for me to do.

I am there  
with the thunder also,  
with the after-sun.

16 August 2009

## THE GAME

Men play  
only against beauty.  
There is kindness  
and there is blue sky.  
Then there is chess  
a game with no one in it  
shapes moving in emptiness.

It could be anywhere  
numbers cast shadows  
your fingers can feel the shadows  
move in dry soft rigidity.  
The numbers loved you a little  
then they were gone.

16 August 2009



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The shadow crept across my hand  
with nothing to cast it.  
Then the shadow slipped off  
my fingertip and fell—  
as if an inkstain  
suddenly cleansed.

When the shadow walks  
and the man sits still  
someone is knowing something  
that you don't know.

16 August 2009

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Cry of other bird.  
Psaltery. Music  
explains everything—

or silences it all  
into its own persuasion  
—we all go

to that damned church,  
all we give up  
for such beauty.

For Orpheus is Lent  
as well as springtime,  
from this sour wine

exquisite drunkennesses.

17 August 2009

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If this were time  
it would be who?  
A matchstick boy  
in search of fire  
and boy scout angels  
pelting through trees  
outracing deer

trying to prove  
something to God  
the way we all  
are taught to do  
centuries in church

see we can  
outstrip appetite  
stumble blind and abstinent  
through the infinite museum.

17 August 2009

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I wish I had an appetite  
to give up for Lent, a phone call  
this elegant young phone could make.

To outgrow your desires  
is like a car outgrowing gasoline.

No wonder they cut living flowers  
and heap them on the recent dead.

17 August 2009

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Crows call  
and that is all.  
Open morning—  
what more  
could love give?

17.VIII.09

## MITHRIDATES

All the languages  
waiting to be learned.

Wanting us to know.

When you get down to it  
you can't think you know much about the world  
if you don't know all the languages in it

how can I bear not knowing  
what an Armenian or Fijian or Gilyak knows so well?

Or that Hungarian over there  
more cultured and euro-svelte than I  
still knows some thing only Central Asia knows,

hard sky with a hawk in it.

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Every language is a piece of the puzzle. A necessary piece, and woe to us  
when we let pieces vanish from the world.

Chomsky tried to get through the back door of language, arguing away  
differences in hopes of finding (monotheism triumphant) the Master Plan,  
some little god in the cerebrum. Meantime the living evidence was dying  
out, whole languages vanishing every year as native speakers passed away.  
Linguistics lost fieldwork and relaxed into speculation.

Can we imagine a person who knows all human languages? How many languages can one person know, use, speak, recognize? Are there any hard studies or soft traditions, anecdotes, any Mithridates left?

And what really happens (Chomsky, to be fair, might ask some form of this question too), what really happens when the Buddha speaks and all the hearers hear Him speaking their own language?

As ditto the Apostles when the Paraclete came down in tongues of fire on them and these unlettered men were heard to speak all languages.

Can we breed for language facility, like Pharaoh Psammeticus devote a family to raising, generation after generation, more and more skilful acquirers of language, until one day there stood forth:

a child who could speak everything?

And who would tell us?

To that Child I offer up this cup.

18 August 2009

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Waiting for the slow  
unfolding of what system of governance  
was or was not available.

A summerwind right now  
midAtlantic storm tomorrow  
and I had broken the rock down

I had crumbled human history  
like old brick too long in the fireplace  
things break, stories come out

the Mercy has taken the king away  
we are alone with our own,  
the terrible brother.

18 August 2009



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Too many things not to worry about  
a princess in golden satin babushka  
with a herd of bison roaming her shoulderblades  
you've been there too you knew the mother  
who flooded the neighborhood with her pollen  
and now you have to pretend to be a gladiolus  
so people will bring you home and give you water  
and you can blossom lance by lance  
you don't need much more than your own flourishing  
just look at you all ruddy please look at me.

18 August 2009

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Too hurried to worry  
there is remorse built in  
era of asthma  
*not so much to do*  
*as not to be done to*  
carf'd in letterys fyne  
over the bleak gate.  
Once there was iron.

Do you remember a dove  
seven stories down in Waikiki  
when we were roof?  
To look down on a bird.

We learned then what it means  
to look down into the sky  
as at Makapu'u you knew  
(but I was afraid)  
how to walk on the wind.

Everything is a matter  
of finding the right island.

See, the land you live on  
changes the language you speak,

shapes it—over a few  
generations—into its voice too,  
the earth's voice in that place,  
not just yours.

The words coming out of your mouth  
don't come just from you.

Once you know that,  
no talk is quite the same.

This ground says me.

Land, language, and genetics  
the pivot in the middle.

19 August 2009

## **BOUKRANION**

But the bull's head  
still rests on the rock  
and the bees long since  
have hived in its hollows.  
The horns hold up the sky.

You never needed more than this:  
to know that you're utterly alive  
and that you'll die, and all the while  
life is busy in your hollow head  
with nourishment and amplitude

leaving an empty place in you  
between right and left  
a place that is the same as the sky.

19 August 2009