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The shape of returning  
carrying sea in the head  
as never, and again  
a presence, the wall  
against which I stand  
supports me, keeps me in—

what would it be to go through the sea,  
not the swan or u-boat of it  
but through, entirely, what it is,  
the cold mothering stone  
that does not know how to keep still,

or if it does, it is another angel  
suddenly stopping time  
so that the sea can rest.

And what kind of man is the sea  
that I, strong as I am, could hold him,  
compel all the genders of him to yield  
and quiet me with his tumultuous peace?

20 June 2008  
Lindenwood

*for PLW, on the backcover of our Atlantis...*

Where'd he get that figleaf  
in the sea?

And why are his tines  
so blunt and curt?

Ah me, I am  
a believer, I care too much about such things—

god knows there aren't so many gods to go round.  
and I know Poseidon, who was *Potei Dan*, Ruler of the Earth  
itself both wet and dry,  
and he was god and great and green,

I know his tines  
could spear an eel for thee or cod for me, I know his cock  
could never hide beneath so trim a leaf,  
I know he is mighty and his wife is a secret name  
or maybe a name the waves are shouting all the time  
and we don't dare to hear.

20 June 2008

= = = = =

Open and obvious, like a dream.  
The sand you spread out belonged to  
me, was the name of it a curious green  
like a lizard in Victorian times  
the way they thought they thought about  
war. Like a dragon he said but really  
more in summer islands close behind  
the porch the way Americans became  
watching ever watching small.  
Things mean you. He averred and not  
a single in the whole afternoon. Things  
really do and nothing else does ever  
be secure. Sure is short for what today.  
In the parlor alone with a candle.  
Everything was so far away that day  
the way the country or the ocean can  
and every street was leaving me.  
Some dead animal between road and hedge.  
That's what makes this sort of thing  
a sonnet when you aren't counting men.

21 June 2008

= = = = =

Scurrilous attitude spelled with a W—  
over the counter I explained to them carefully  
the earth is asleep in the summer its work all accomplished  
in winter it works and is busy with enterprise  
so in spring when it comes and you all look about you  
what you see as a rose opening is the world falling asleep

now it's our business only to make sure that the earth  
is there when it wakes again, hasn't been transported  
into some ash-heap randomly orbiting Úranus  
because of inept politicians in love with themselves  
and no other creatures alive in the universe  
just the dollar sign: a snake wrapped around numero uno.

21 June 2008

= = = = =

Oil from an olive  
tree grew before there were goats  
to graze at the stem of it  
rock over a sea no named yet

water, we are just water.  
Oil is water thickened by time  
said Tarsinius. Time is space  
diluted by memory.

Remember. His treatise  
*Peri Nêsôn* –On Islands—  
is full of ingenious lies.  
There are no islands,

the sea is continuous  
and I mean forever. We stand  
on a quarter-hour either way  
frozen into place. Place

is somewhere else. Someone  
lives there. No book tells how  
and most books try. He:  
I touched time once and it broke.

So children still keep coming  
though almost any other way  
would be better. Is better.  
In another book he denounces the womb.

21 June 2008

## UNFAVORABLE DAY. EARTH FIRE. NO MARRIAGE

1.

What need know. Polestar  
on flagpole, dimity frock, slack  
perpetuas fading neath shrubbery you bet.  
Men mean different things by it or this man does.  
Every puzzle answers sex. Not hygiene  
but Ordinary Rain bedew another with and by.  
A sacrament a stitch in time  
not a commitment but a timely pledge  
to last inside the other as oneself at best.  
All the sonnets are subsumed in this.

2.

Why go on. Calf speed two hours Denver  
no places please. Raise your hand  
as you'd raise a red heifer all tenderness and name  
and know this body pays someday for all it gets to do,  
sans which the spirit would go reft of agency  
a toolless mind is hell on wheels.

3.

Tell little enough of what's to know  
but it still has to be some poor soul's hand  
to hold it. The parts are *of* something.  
Which weather are we part of, the windows  
shake with rain, drown out the rabbi's  
questions, all we have are soft evasions  
of the obvious, Sunday twilights,  
auntly get-togethers I pick up sticks  
you build a whole house. What to do  
there, under the roof tiles with the dormice,  
under the rafters, under the ceiling,

bats in the bedroom, and under the covers  
what to do. Unfavorable day,  
earth quenches fire, fire turns earth  
to a fine clayey cup we do drink from  
at least. All day and everyday. No marriage  
but an infinite gymnasium, a long thought  
to feed that Hegel in your head. Your hand.

22 June 2008

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Could *I* be right in all the purgatories  
slick black streets don't say it's rain  
no brother and no mother the agency  
ever apt at parting *x* from *y* amazing  
space between and between a river  
has two thoughts in mind to stand  
before the loveless and proclaim  
shoeless penances of seadrift and be gone  
*I* got here and where are *you* or is that  
meaning redundant as a leaf on bushes  
in summer how much light does matter  
need to eat before the soul-stuff  
ripens in it or the tiger-lily *knows*?

On the day after knife the chemicals used  
be thrown out and start again o rodent Time  
up to her hocks in foam 'effluent' anyway  
now the theme recurs in fire seeking  
a witchy subdominant in morning glow  
rapt in fiduciary calm, *all* music's sentimental  
and every breath is the beloved's yes.

Then it was evening. Scruples of fireflies  
tumble from the rye grass a spook in meadow  
under the huge sycamore acres of time  
the Persian army rested once beneath a single leaf.

23 June 2008

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If I wrote a word every day  
how long would it take to reach the sea?  
Or an immature blackbird  
is speckled brown and odd  
like a caprimulge or whippoorwill  
or I don't know.  
You showed me one, you said it was  
and I believed you like the very air.

23 June 2008

= = = = =

Outrage metabolism swiftly river  
pluck the ornament anent desire  
but do it swoop no sparrowing around  
but phallus to the metal à la vroom  
beforehand, as a kid butts – even her milk  
makes drunk – who granted this alpage  
into cloud keep shatter pasture? “A shabby  
slit betwixt philosophers,” said the reviewer—  
who *isn't* plastered in the window commodity?  
Welcome, walk home like a jay, all blue and enemy,  
the earthirls itch from all the tunes  
that notch right in, a granite face  
watches inside every dream ever landed  
rough in sinful jungle clearing one pale head.

24 June 2008

= = = = =

I'm not going to try to prove anything.  
Aspirin tastes harsh and sudden  
but that doesn't last long.  
Prose is clutchier than poetry—

I want a novel that knows how to leave me alone,  
a novel full of unexplained absences,  
no startling weekends at the shore, divorces,  
fainting fits. I have my own life  
and sometimes I'm willing to share it with a book.

But a poem – even the dullest, most pretentious, predictable, rule-bound,  
correct poem – is pure light. The glee of it is swift as salt.

24 June 2008

## FROM THE TABLES OF THE LAW

1.

Desire is stronger than anything else,  
the desired thing always better than  
the thing itself. So desire must be a force  
ponderable, a constant even,  
a gravity of heart.

2.

Every book has twenty-one chapters  
like the major trumps of the Tarot.  
The 22<sup>nd</sup> trump, which is the first,  
in my end is my beginning,  
is the sacred figure called the Fool.  
So the twenty-second chapter  
of every book is the Reader:  
shown reading, thinking,  
letting the book fall from the hand.

24 June 2008

## MIDNIGHT

the summer road covered with a snow of light  
the stream you hardly hear all day  
roars by.

24.VI.08

## CELLPHONE

Listen to the voices – she  
is all alone with the instrument  
her heart is in her hand  
the rest of us flow past

hearing scraps of what she so  
urgently is telling the unseen  
on this ordinary street among us  
her eyes in hell.

2.

I too have spent a lot of my life  
(here it comes, the me part)  
talking boldly to the street  
but with nothing in my hand.

I didn't even have the courtesy  
to hold a plastic shell to my ears  
pretending to listen to an angel  
or the sea. No, sir. Telling is all.

3.

If you (and here you are at last)  
listen hard, who knows where you'll be  
or what you'll see when the phone  
finally goes dead and you open your eyes?

25 June 2008

## THE RULERS

1.

The rule-bearers of higher hindsight  
are willet-legged semaphores  
pillaging the lower sky – you know how,  
you have flown with them in your dreams  
falling from heaven. By definition:  
*the place from which one falls or fell—*  
nothing else is known for sure. Or noon.

2.

The rule-breakers on the other side  
wear red bikinis and wake early.  
Care be full, they say, existenz is night,  
they say, we are glorious with wordies  
ever-seekish, catoptric presences abound  
and only I am escaped to break the frigging glass.  
Peradventure paramours? Red-clever blackbirds  
pecking holes in Pindar's text, crumbs  
of difference make the little wordies dance.

3.

So much meaning! So everywhere!  
Impend, great Sanhedrin aloft in Thee

or me indifferently! Adjudicate,  
precipitate! For I was Mercury then I fell.  
The oxide of me crept into your hands.  
Buried in horse dung the ancient violin  
ripens months into the even older  
sweetness of the original Wood.  
Sounds better still, like an old king  
singing in the shower. Steam everywhere,  
ships oinking through the harbor fog,  
smokes, sulphurs, saltines gone soggy  
down in the third class cabins,  
what would I know about God? Isn't it  
enough I fetishize everything that breathes?

4.

And all too much that doesn't. Moraine.  
Sad bit here, about the clay-hued souls  
interred on Long Island's spine in rain.  
The angel of death carved above a tomb  
(on the right side as the bus climbs north)  
explains all this: if they didn't die  
there'd be no room for the living and the ones  
to come. Why must they come, the students  
asked, we paid good money for you  
to answer all our questions so now tell.  
They must come because I am powerless  
to stop their soft arrivals. We can't

correct the world but we can interfere.  
That is the night-shift we call art –  
screw you, they said, we want our wants,  
we want our money back. You have no  
back, personhood these days is only front.  
A flack for something on its way, an ad  
for angels or for the apocalypse.

5.

Solipsism is such a relief after bullshit.  
Intuitionalist workshops with no coffee break,  
just Brahms chattering out of the headset,  
sonata lonely as a beach at Childermas.  
Metaphors keep staggering in, 's not my job  
to keep them out. Is. Welcome! Is  
the old king clean even yet? Must be,  
hear nothing songly from the bath,  
the light is on, the transformation done.  
How gold comes glimmer through the shithouse door!  
How the things that we make love with  
never tell us what love is, hush, hush,  
eschew the clamorous guitar, I tried  
to clear my mind once and look what came.

26 June 2008

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Having sense one moves on to another  
or be at care for somdel thingliness  
amort the many – hoick flag!  
stoop fowl! A hawk is catching for you,  
second-string cosmologists eat lunch—  
coffee for me just coffee thanks—  
it is nothing that we see out there  
and nothing the other side of it and nothing  
we can do about it. Sugar just sugar.

27 June 2008

## DISCORSO

Pour talk into nothingness  
and be a monk of it,  
to be glib, and glad,  
and give infomercials  
by universities and be paid  
o paradiso!

Could he mean me?

It's pronoun time, Augustine, you  
who invented the second person  
singular. And in the shadow of that  
great You is Me – is what you said  
I ween, for how else would all those stars  
fit in one window and leave room for me  
or all those different crystals in one snow?

These aren't real questions you divine,  
bothersome entanglements of orchestral sound  
like death in Texas or Salome prompted  
to her final dance. Not the bible,  
somewhere else. Equivalent conspiracies  
of grace poured down from all our  
past lives the light that we call God.  
But there is somebody there! If  
and only if there's somebody right here.

27 June 2008

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It's hard to forgive Africa for being so far—  
modern ethics is a calculus of blame.

Ill-favored rhapsodes grunt over their keyboards  
a thousand Onans plunk at their guitars—

I loved your painting of the slender leg  
vanishing up a billowing skirt as if

we build our bodies like houses from beneath.  
Whereas the roof comes first in us

and all pours down from that transparent bone  
in the half inch between your head and God.

27 June 2008