

9-2008

**sepD2008**

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Easy to sound colloquial, just think  
of your uncle and talk to him. OK,  
somebody else's uncle, no need  
to be picky. You're full of contradictions,  
an opera with no music in it.

Then it was evening, and the Athenians  
were shivering in the aspen groves—  
it was one of those nights when nothing  
worked, even pain was unreliable.

Not a toothache in the whole army,  
just a young understanding moon  
perched on the steam-laundry smokestack.

And in those days you and I still  
had the sense to say our prayers to her.

12 September 2008

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all the words today left  
in the web of the hours

something old about now  
something blue inside

all this prancing crimson  
the pronouns get all confused

I'm camping on your sofa  
and you in my personal sky

it could be a comedy or pure  
otherwise I can't tell apart

the rictus of grief from laughter  
because the pain is everlasting

and all we can do is giggle  
stupidly in our snug agonies

actors following blindly  
with no director a blank script.

12 September 2008

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Or a word is just a blade  
between the mind  
and its little world

to let light in  
from that bigger one  
we guess to share.

The object of desire  
is desire. Love itself  
is remembering something

that seemed to happen  
long before, we try  
to put my hands on it

now but never will.  
It recedes in front of me  
deep inside me.

Every word an echo only.

12 September 2008

## KING ÆDWIN'S SPARROW

Confronted by Christians  
teaching him or trying to,  
the King solicited advice  
from this thanes and pagans,

his priests they said Consider  
the winter, you sit at meat  
in the hall with friends and drink  
dark outside with storm and ice

from which on a sudden one  
sparrow flies in, flaps  
dazed around the room  
happy in warmth and light

and then is gone – we humans  
live like that, nothing known  
of our before and after, nothing  
known of what's really outside,

maybe these new ideas  
will tell us what we need to know.  
Or maybe not. Try them  
a season and we'll see.

So the king allowed Christians  
to come and teach till soon  
his people were converted, wet hair  
dangling in their blue eyes

and so it went a thousand years  
or more. But the King  
in his heart knew something else,  
that sparrow was not just life

betwixt borning and dying,  
that bird was every thought  
ever flutters through the mind  
of joy or lust or pain

and then is gone, “that bird  
is every single thing, and this brain  
of mine one blazing hall  
full of minstrelsy and grief

outside which there is something  
dark and cool and everlasting.  
When will some priest teach me  
to go with the bird and be gone?”

13 September 2008

## OCD

1.

After a while  
it goes away  
you miss it  
then, you turn  
the faucet off  
only once, you  
lock the door  
and walk away.

You miss your  
madness that made  
you you, you  
thought, but then  
another madness took  
you in hand,  
love, the other  
people loved you

and their insanity  
swallowed up all  
your own. Everything  
tastes different now  
because you are  
finally the same.

2.

Now if I touch this  
I don't have to touch  
that. The pity I used  
to feel for unused things  
hurts less now, things know  
how to take care of

themselves, they gave me my  
own soul back I lodged  
in them, each picket in  
the fence had to touch,  
skip all the sidewalk cracks.

13 September 2008



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Along the coasts of the image

can I go back and find you later  
another day or is the picture  
locked in time so that

whenever I look on you I am when you are,  
the heavy wool on Atget's women makes me sweat

but today is today  
and no image

I think or is thinking so  
an image of me as a man with something on his mind  
staring into the mirror and seeing nothing  
and liking it better than what the mirror sees?

Drown your image in images—  
Michael Mayer: *Bring fire to the fire.*

13 September 2008

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there is no CIA

not even the Collective Imagination of America  
whereby we project our guilt  
into the world as agency  
of the evil resident within our doubt.

Foreigners keep out.

Have an army take it far away  
to invade a country soldiers never heard of  
and kill weird-looking strangers.

We vote to do it year after year  
and then the hurricane comes  
and we won't let it tell us anything

all the catastrophes are just our karma ripening  
(and the red states get the brunt of it,

the blue voted against the war they get hurt less)

13 September 2008

## DAY OF THE CROSS

The mystery here  
the lifting up of the Holy Cross  
to be colloquial

the finding of the holy Residue  
rough intact inside  
the ordinary animal of our speech

the day the day itself  
the definite  
article by which we live

it also lives.

The long Lent of the monks begins today  
when they take seriously  
the word they have said. Heard. Had.  
The word they had happen to them.  
The word they hold.

That is why they say The  
Cross, for there is only one  
and each one finds it, climbs it,  
is taken down dead from it  
and comes to life another time,  
the always the never the again.

The thing finds us,  
the ultimate instrument,  
and when it gets lost, then the queen  
comes along and digs it up

she always knows where it is hidden,  
lifts it, or has her daughters  
friends lovers soldiers lift it  
into the local sky,

the Cross the one same thing,  
the business nailed to the sun and

every definite word  
says this history again.

Dreams told her. Waking  
remembered her to do.  
Lift me, lift me  
it said. Everything she did

did it. She watches them climb.

Nailed to what they mean  
they climb the wood of what they want,  
matter *madera*  
the lumber of light

they told us was the lumber of love.

Then it was evening  
and the wood hid itself again in earth  
indefinite.

The pain slept.  
14 September: Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross.  
Language begins.

2.

Language begins when we are nailed to what we mean  
by what we say. The definite  
loves you  
                    better than I can.

I don't want to find the definite,  
I want to walk around the edges of it,

stare into the abyss of the singular  
darker than any guess could gleam

and wander there by footstep night and weird  
waiting for candles to flicker up in passing houses

sometimes stop and have to talk in them  
for the sake of something warm

those terrible ones who are not you  
while I walk around the rim of the thing

this local absolute bereft and so much for me.

14 September 2008

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Planning to know everything  
he actually knows  
only the things his hands like touching  
minus the things they like letting go.

14 September 2008

## **KISMET**

Finding a fond star.  
Today is your horoscope  
erected by a skeptic.  
Today is finding  
the way a child finds  
in any place at all  
something to do.  
That is destiny.

14 September 2008

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something swarming  
alarming like the slash  
of sword on sword

the birds of Damascus  
make such weather  
dry rain  
                    children made of cloud

they hate us  
for being  
or because our being  
appears to them as bigger than their own

whereas whereas  
we can hear the slish of swordplay better  
the nasty noise of razored air

the wound of music  
never leaves their ears.

14 September 2008



## THE MATERIAL

Less be said  
be *alternate*.

Speak the altar,  
language of the other.

God spread out upon the world  
hearing us think with His machine

this godly gift called Matter  
without which no canzone,  
no Alp, no hand  
to touch your hand.

2.  
No even you.

Since what we are  
is *separations*,  
trial apartnesses,  
boxed off in the *materials of difference*.

To see what happens.

*The sea is made of me*, you said,  
and the wind ruffled your hair.

My theology is complete.

15 September 2008

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When rain comes on Rainday  
and on Winday the wind blows  
it means the world is running right  
and the rose tree sets off a rose.

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what does it mean that people  
like us are locked inside each other  
is it forever like a scar a shadow  
from a sun that won't go down

inside us a tin box from Mexico  
stuffed with old rose petals  
no color but they still smell  
and we never did anything

we don't even have to talk  
anymore or phone or write or  
not even remember just a presence  
inside us the flesh of the mind.

15 September 2008

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Risks, ruins, apartments  
in which dying lilies are kept.  
How strong the smell. Always  
and always. Never lose essence.  
Nothing can ever be less than itself  
said Aflatun, I think. Or it would be hell  
on earth, a palace of diminishing.  
Wisdom is a book on a shelf  
in a burnt-down mansion long ago.

15 September 2008

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Who can answer the question outside the little room  
the moon he tried to mean but she was small  
that night who now overwhelmed the meager window  
—We are all about looking, he said—  
and there would never be any rain. Forgive me, father,  
for I grew. I turned into you. My eyes dimmed,  
my stratosphere rehearsed some other universe  
when one honest home planet would do. I did it to you.  
I just wanted to be as good as you used to be  
at things you cared enough to be good at but did I care?  
He was silent for a few minutes like a cup of wine  
with no wind blowing, or a book in a bookstore window  
closed for the night where a cat sits watching the moon.

16 September 2008

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All poems end with the moon.  
The poem is always saying  
*Look at this thing close at hand*  
then it distracts you from it,  
*Look at that bright thing in the sky*

out of arm's reach, inconsolable,  
even the nearby will never be near enough,  
even what your hand actually holds  
you will never really feel.  
Hurry from this house into the arms of the moon.

16 September 2008