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THE SYSTEM

Ask the Ptolemies of it
for your axes
then spill cathedrals

if I claim tomorrow
who will know there
better than a street

or say you never
or a nave, the columns
of Amiens did you ever

no they will let though
the assertion stand
like the sky around the sun

by old entitlement
come close to truth
and make love with number

or go to sleep
earth bare
no other choice.

28 July 2007

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Wishing I could come closer to us
a dog. Not afraid.
Wishing people shouting in the street
shouted at me. I am afraid
of madness yes and every flower
on that tree. O for the bare
winter of our sanity
where nothing sounds but wind
and wind is always other
to each and each. An egg,
legal as an egg, quiet now
with everything yet to come.

28 July 2007

A SHOUT

How a man on the street in New York
shouting angrily to no one in Japanese
is the same as an old friend maybe dying
in Mexico full of clamorous refusal
means the world cannot hold
all the things that have to be said,
talk louder talk faster never listen,
our normal condition should be
screaming against the languageless void.

28 July 2007

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All we have?
Or is it all we have to do?

Rain spotting up here
while those who fled to the interior
roar in jungle pain.

Sorry. The reality principle
is stronger than bone. Sorry,

I flee from rage. I cling
to the surfaces of things,
only they can save me

when the last light falls.

28 July 2007

SHAKESPEARE

Never minded being wrong.
The color of the ink
told him what to say.
By hue and density
decided for him.
A writer is just along for the ride.

28 July 2007

(SHAKESPEARE, 2)

Maybe he listened better than anyone else.
While Blake heard angels, he heard us.

And both kinds of hearing are needed.
Put the Sweden back in Swedenborg:

the social and the notional. The sea and the shore.

28 July 2007

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Warped, almost,
by the comfort of having.

Sun briefly out
where 'out' means

with us. As if we
lived outside the world.

28 July 2007

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I can't explain anything.
It is done.

28 VII 07

DAY EIGHT-K'ANIL

(for Cole & Israeli)

Roast corn we chewed
when corn day came in
rain around us and the river fish
this is the full moon too
and everything knows how to hide.

And aren't we just ampersands,
a thing that's not a word
that tells you you're just reading
a book when there you were
thinking somebody was talking to you.

They hardly ever do. We ate
the fish, eggplant ivory and blue,
seamless corn, I emptied my plate
like a theater after a good play
leaving the audience – that living
coral Marcel called it – with plenty to discuss.

Gossip is our god.
If only clams could talk.
We know our limits,
we are patriots of the horizon,
just fence me in. Insinuate
me, the other Frenchman said,
into your story. So the day
begins at nightfall, is holy
in a way, the way things are
that come and touch us
and then they go. The days
are gods, and numbers are
gods and you and I do share
certain aspects of divinity.
The only thing that is not god is God.

29 July 2007

THE ILLUSTRATED EDITION

—That was the rock told me a story.

—What does this rock know
and will it tell
and will I be the one,
mother, may I?

—Why is gold(?).

—My skin is almost close enough to touch.

—Noah's Ark means everyone, Each person has to be an Ark, must carry a Full Set of Everything Else inside him. Each one of us has his personal Deluge. And someday each one's Dove will fly off from the mast, and a crow will come back, that wise and decent bird, to tell us that Earth is still there, still ours enough to live on, live with all the people we're bringing with us in our Ark. Our Arks. Then we must decide, not alas for the first time, whether we're fit to live with each other on this rescued Earth.

—You've seen this stick, or is it a twig. Now imagine it.

—Now imagine you never saw it at all. Imagine not seeing it, while not seeing something else either. That's the sort of thing we did in high school while the other boys were having sex.

—Imagine your skin worn neatly by someone else. What would it be like to touch her then?

—Would you even know?

—Me is a condition of nausea. I vomit when I see my shadow, then I weep, apologize. I would kiss the mirror but I would taste my lips.

—The worst thing about lovemaking is tasting or smelling or seeing traces of oneself on the body of the beloved.

—A man strangled by his shadow.

29 July 2007

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The light before there was light

the alien glow
from which the first light gathered

Aurora they thought came from
the apes at first light, *ur-ur-ur* they cry
out in something like pain

because the dawn is breaking
and time is the only house they have..

29 July 2007
Olin

= = = = =

Not feeling walkative.
The day. The sun a
golden skirt on whom?
What hides beneath?
Transiency. Lumen
of the obvious, the light
inside the egg. Ache.
An angry face passes
fast. Falling asleep
at the counter, old days,
the old days! Gunshot
and the famous outlaw
falls. Wake. Lie there
for all I care, dead
as fantasy. Get up,
there are children watching,
wake, speak check-out
French, barroom Basque.
I love you is an impossible
proposition in any other
language. Limestone
we can translate, cave,
candle, lupanar. But not
this. Never this.

30 July 2007

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String of consciousness
Amish midwife
hauls the newborn out
up to the light, I give thee
back to thyself again,
give me to the light again
Amen. Like all truths
it is whispered. It is old.

30 July 2007

COUNTRY

Something seems to be burning
in what seems to be a kitchen.
A flapjack has caught fire,
carbon now the rim of it,
syrup melts, fuses, scorches,
dries. The fire fails finally.
Wait. The mother appears
to be still smiling. The grass
outside the house is full
of its usual unawareness. Nothing
but beauty anywhere in sight.

30 July 2007

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Skull antrum under atrium
the foramen aloft
the building's intelligence
the light falls through

three hawks above.

What is infant in us sees.

Skull mountain.

 Dig limestone till
the actual neural tunnel shows

then gasp the dark. Take it in,

make a horn in your mouth
suck the light in and hold it
till it gets thick and dark

then you can see. Then you animal.

30 July 2007

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Put on your custom
someone's dead.

The wolves
never trusted us, the woods
themselves fall back. We lie
to each other all day long

and wake afraid, choking
on the half-truths of dream.

It's all right to be wrong.
Just forgive what's going to happen.
Forgiveness means now.

Means everything that is.
Children set to scrape
paint from an old wall.

30 July 2007
in memory of Ingmar Bergman

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As if there were revenge
and a white horse
quiet now at pasture now
and then a rage

a word that comes from a mad dog
a man I find inside my cage

<drawing of a ribcage>
<with an angry>
<manikin>
<in it>

or a bird. A bird is something else,
something almost irrational.

Or why do they want to be up there
where only virgins are?

Streetcars and hearses and ice cream and clarinets,
o Polish wedding just to be on earth!

but then the old-time record broke,
shellac shatters after chattering,
a whole generation of pale men
grew up to see the fragility of art—

it's not the words are ugly, the music is.
The music hates, the music loves
and we're left naked in between.
The white horse lifts his old white head.

31 July 2007

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Soon there will be time
and then again. The striving
of compunction in a killer's
heart, a knife held back.
There. Anger is the only animal.

31 July 2007

= = = = =

Presumably they know what they're doing,
presumably the weather has something in mind

but they never tell us, we only know
what happens to us, if it really is us,

if we even know that. Opinions differ.
Who killed Kennedy. Or anything at all.

It must mean something or else it wouldn't even be.
But what could such things mean?

And what does even meaning something amount to
in all the smoke and screaming and rubble and blood?

31 July 2007

WANDERER

Would you take your name from a lake
or a mountain if you had to? Would you walk
all night talking to a forest or to a glacier?

Over the ridge, animals are coming, are watching you
but you of course can't see them in the dark/
You need a different kind of eyes.

As they come closer you keep talking,
they stop and listen. It seems that you persuade them.
Without your know anything of all this they turn and run away.

31 July 2007

= = = = =

Walk me by eye
and touch my piano.
Wisdom of skin
alone, unpracticed
perfect crafts-
manship the sun.

Be a believer.

Now it is summer
at last, the sweat
starts, my eyelashes
mist over. Walk me
into your glance.
Keep me by radio.
Remember for me:

this is a steeple
those used to be people.
Now it is only now.
Hopelessly wonderful,
presence itself
is the only power.
Whenever I think
of you it turns into now.

31 July 2007

NACHMITTAG, SPÄT

No more poem.
Sun at back
I write in shadow.

The dog sang
on the hill,
sleep was a sister
who called my name,

softly Robert Robert fall
into the unremembering

where long before you
the words got lost.

31 July 2007

THE POSSIBILITY

To be able to be a line
and walk there
starting out always from your own house
wherever that is

and all the magic animals
walk at your side
and above you the Guides and Shelterers
mostly the crows

and have there really be there
when you arrive,
every kiss you ever got
still wet on your lips.

31 July 2007