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THE QUEEN OF CLUBS

is who it said, the staves or wands
or magical baguettes
the conductor lofts above the orchestra
an extension of the human arm

a tool she manifests and understands and holds.
Queen it over. To will a thing
and it be done. By means of. *thabs*,

the working part. The Queen of Means.

1 September 2007

FRANCESCA

turned to her Paolo once again
and settled down: do this with me.
We do not have to go,
this flight of ours is habit only,

come down with me and egg the ground.
Be simple and stop.
And think the thought finally
all our years of flight were meant
to keep us from thinking.

We can be quiet with each other
and let the morning happen to itself.
All we ever need to do is know.

1 September 2007

= = = = =

But *all* language happens from the dead.

The voice of my father calls me from the earth
north slope of the Long Island terminal moraine,
commands me to avenge his death, take revenge
on Time itself who brought him to the grave.
Bring Time to a stop. And every day I try to do.
Stop time. Hold Time over an imponderable abyss
until it screams in terror. The scream of Time
is pure silence. I keep silence for a long time.
Silent I remember my father's pale green eyes.

1 September 2007

(he died 13 September 1990)

= = = = =

The horse rears up.
His hooves scrabble at the sky.
Why. What can he
want up there?

Then some children playing with a ball.
Suddenly something nearby is all.
You can carry it. You can throw it
away and make it bounce back.

Someday the horse will
pull the sky down
on top of him then
at last he can sleep.

1 September 2007

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I am what is wrong with this picture.
Me and my desires and abstentions,
palaver and silences. I should be not.

1 IX 07

= = = = =

One terrible liberating day
you wake up and realize:
“Here everything is right except me.”

1 IX 07

TOAST

Not even that much to say I stand up,
congratulate the hostess on her nodding roses—
we were all young once— then turn
to the bishop and apologize for smut
undoubtedly to come. Goes with the job
(Rhapsode second class, with bay leaf cluster.)

Then I begin. Art is a kind of underwear
between our tender sensibilities and
the rough economic fact. Museums ease
everything but our feet, yet at the same time
make us vaguely anxious, want to strive
for more: beauty, significance, even fame.

And as for poetry, it passes the time.
But the time it passes (pace Samuel Beckett)
would not have passed anyhow. Our kind
of time unfurls from the words themselves
and lets us in. We run or play or hide
therein – and then it's gone. And brute Time
our ordinary master locks us in again.

I want to tell my listeners something so
important, but I've lost them now,
time for a joke but this opera has no jokes,
only a pretty lady sleeping in the curve
of a crescent moon – I show her to them
but only a few bother looking up. The rest
are lost in their private lives, receipts,
rolling olives around on empty plates.

2 September 2007

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I got up before me today.
I could get cute and say me was still sleeping
but there was a laundry
in my head where they were washing,
men and women slapping linen on the rocks
and I said Egypt and me said nothing
so I got up and lit a candle
and here you are.

3 September 2007

= = = = =

Perch a bird on a rafter
in somebody else's house

and be that bird.
Sing to them, watch their every move
as they fail to understand you
or even themselves most of the time.

Watch over them, squawk
when danger's coming, coo quietly
when they are tender down below.

It is your job. Your voice
was made for this. Your wing.

3 September 2007

= = = = =

The names of people
tell too much.
But never the whole story.
The whole story
would be just enough.

3 IX 07

OWLGLASS

1.

Let as much of it as can
be chosen by cod fishermen before Columbus
and the rest we'll leave to Spain.
Pronounce to rime with groin or loin,
the place in the Euro-body where
silence hurts the most.
Blue shadows in the arroyo. Arrive,
cloud. But never rain.
The towers of the broken Moors
still hurt the sky. I mean the skin
of those who brush against them
trying to be somewhere far away.
Fat Carib islands sleek with rain
with air nobody breathed before you
it's all yours now. It's all you.
America, you crazy Iowa, you lowing
cattle outside Roggen, you greybeard hippies
catching shadows in their ears
from a banjo time they loved
when such stuff was music and they hoped.
And we hoped too. No advantage.
Six in the lowest line: no foundation.

2.

It was Irish of them to begin that way
all terror and no hope, all lust
and no gizm left unspilled, o the poor
priests who had to handle such repentance,
o the poor gulls who had to fertilize
such barren eyots, help, the words
failed them, they fell upon English
and mispronounced it tunefully,
those poor green boys. Salute, sea!
Ave, wave! I go to church again
in the merest circumstance, any stone
as comfy as a woman's lap.

3.

As if he were the hero here he spoke.
Hos ephat', as Homer said, riming
with Jehosaphat we schoolboys laughed
by Belfast Loch by Brooklyn's towers
by the train above the river hauling
poor us into the Bastille. Nowhere
has come home again. Nowhere
has eaten everywhere again, the star
above your cradle shatters nightly
crisp green quotations to infest your dreams.
It is so sad to have to sleep.

4.

But he wanted to tell you a story.
The little hill in Mecklenburg
the borrowed car at midnight
and no girls. Holy men drowse
in fields of rye, an owl cries,
the story is always beginning, never
gets there, anywhere
a story ever reaches is no story
anymore, it's just here. Little hill
in a night country, a man who laughs
will pay dearly for his laughter,
little hill that leads up to the moon,
the sea not too far away, nothing safe.
He wanted to become a story
he could tell you. What about?
The moon again, always somebody
just out of reach but bright, bright,
filling up your personal sky. Aspiration.
Striving. Impossibility. Sweat.
Things you'd laugh at if you knew.
You know. I'd rather you laugh
than just be silent. Speak to me.
Do you think you really are a tree?

3 September 2007

= = = = =

Listening to someone talk
I back away. I think:
music is what happens
after. You walk home
in the frosty night
your head crazy with images.
It was Mahler. Now nothing
is ever over.

3 September 2007

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The river and its barges
the hills and their river
in low sun. Donau
I have seen the spring
where you begin. Hill,
I have seen the rock
from which you grew.
But never have I seen
where that boat comes from
that leads so many
down to the black sea.

4 September 2007

(Haydn, Quartet No.66, Allegro moderato)

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I believe in the oranges
rolling across the green table
falling on the floor. I believe
in making juice from the bruised fruit.
I believe all of us will die and rise again.

4 September 2007
(Haydn, Quartet No.66, 2nd movement)

CRAYON

Write big on the map. The words
become haystacks, rills, fences,
old woman milking her goats.

4 September 2007

(Beethoven, Quartet No.11, 3rd movement.)

TRAVEL POSTER

If you can't get there on foot
Don't go .

4 IX 07