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Something is always matter.

It budes

none too easy or

the bird of it

chants on some tree

the also has problems of its own

and can't you see

all this seeing and hearing

is spirit, the lightness, the soft

awayness of the thought,

hearing without listening

is what makes us human,

makes us mind.

17 January 2006

REDHEADS

What a fine red-headed woodpecker
at the feeder, what a fine
trinity of fat mourning doves
dithering underneath it,

and what a fine sun to show me this,
red-headed too at morning –
rain coming, take warning –
even after the first one flies away.

17 January 2006

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Sometimes things are done
and then. Sometimes we say
when all is said and done
but when will that be?

When all is said
there is no more to say,
and all is done – we learn
that the end of saying
is also the end of doing.

Evidently we speak the world into shape.
And what we do
is speaking –

but *actions speak louder than*
words my mother said,
I listened, is listening
an action too? Is *just standing there*
also doing something?

Some many things have been said.
So many crosses mounted
on the way to so many skies.
So many feathers on so many birds
but not even one on my cloak—
yet I claim to be king of the sky
and doesn't saying make it so?

17 January 2006

IKEBANA

Accord – the one is sleeping.
Rage or rush – let the darkness in !
Big starry yellow mum,
terraced spikes of eucalyptus,
a few mistinguettes. Flower
arrangement, holy day of obligation
this very day, Feast of St. Now
the Only. Say your mass in me.

17 January 2006

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To whom does the balcony speak
when no Juliet's there to distract it?

A hand cupped to hold the sky
is why, and nothing matters.

Down below, Jesus passes through the crowded street.

17 January 2006

EARTH FROM ABOVE

for Esther

as if we understood
an orange on a white plate
or on an orange tree,
I had one once
in the San Gabriels
a house a little while
on clear mornings
you could look out
over the whole basin
and see the flash
of the high surf breaking
off Costa Mesa
miles south or
orange on my orange tree.
Not my tree.
You can't own
something like that,
or the avocado,
the lemon, the hibiscus
that marched around the house
and made every window
full of scarlet,
can you imagine ever

getting tired of that?

Tired of the earth,

the oranges, lemons,

surfers, miles and miles,

the whole city

like something in your lap?

17 January 2006

TEN HOWLER MONKEYS CALLING MY NAME

Mocking my silence –

silence is so pretentious, don't you think?

I know the taste of limestone and I tell.

I know the aftertaste of green, the sly

intoxication of the apple leaf,

the poison cherry,

I know the rattle-bird that pounces on the almost dead

and makes them live again,

I know the stone that knows how to talk,

the perfect mirror that shows no face.

I know the little flame that lives in salt

I use it to warm my hands

I read the cave wall by its light

the niter maps, the pornography of crack

I know the sand that thinks beneath the fingernail
scraped from the time to tried
to scratch the sun's face
when I was mad at her for all her perfidy,
loving everybody just as much as me
but we forgive each other now
but still I save her little sandy thinking

I know the ridge to follow up the hill
that brings me to a broken well
so far above the water table
it's always dry, I sit and wonder,
why would they dig a well so high,
a well of wonder
up above everything
where does it go
when it goes down

I know the fear that walks in simple clothes
in ordinary daylight
like the priest on his way to the bank,
nobody here but fear,
fear and me

keep each other company,
 how timidly we kiss,
nibble at the ear or
one hand gently jammed against the chest,

I know how to swallow night
and spit out stars,
 how to rig a tepee so the wind
does all the cooking and the smoke
 turns into quartz
 I wear on all my fingers
but even they can't stop the tears
 and I don't know why I'm crying, do you?

I know what a rabbit knows running through deep grass.

*The names of everything are easy to recall,
 all but my own.*

18 January 2006

On the Day 10 Ba'ts'

MANON

]

En garde!, it's an opera, Fred,
I mean the music means you,
deeps you, chugalugs you
into its own triste histoire.

She died in Louisiana. A drought
made out of water, dead goats
from upriver where lepers live,
all sung loudly in Italian.

Say a prayer for her, tenor,
you and your kind (love, love,
love) brought her pretty bones
to this pass. Her name, Manon,
meant Yes, but No. All permission
and no commitment.

The world
is scared of people like us,
they want the dotted line,
the metronome, not the plumpish
spinto gasping free-form his
tuneless sob, o god of music.

Now it's over and you never
drew your sword. We walk
sort of at peace, tranquil even
in the forgiveness extended
to us freely by the recent dead.

18 January 2006

Red Hook

=====

The shape of things
gone by the glue
that holds the eye
firm to the beheld

the water pistol moon
the Santa Ana aftermath
street signs torn down
scatter the hot wind

I want to be a sailor, *nauta*,
crony, capable of irony,
seduced by salt –
my blood is dragon's blood

I never told you that.
Love me, pine tree,
love me, sea. Shame
is my splendor.

19 January 2006

Poughkeepsie

THE WOODEN INDIAN'S AGITATION

Samuel Constantine Raffinesque
among the Tsalagi
measured the phallic potency of flowers,

the dreams of moss. *Mon heros !*
Naked botany.

Information

is the real garden,

the world began with looking around.

His palms

crimson from raspberries, porphyry,

blue from huckleberries

pressed against a birch tree

and the bark remembered.

And this is to be seen in your deep sleep.

19 January 2006

THE FEZ

Hassan certainty
valley full of dangerous
dreams. Society
of the black fez
meets every Tuesday
in the Automat
on 57th Street
long after that venue
is otherwise deployed.
But what is time
to a Turk? Blue-eyed
almost, or more
pale jade opaque,
a sentient murk.
All times are coincident.
All black hats are green.

20 January 2006

Hudson

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I kiss the flame that knows you greenly
because winter falters also and one traces
nicked in rock that said your mother's name
or hers or his and all the clocks one night
vanished in the morning and who was a bell
to you then dear friend, a bird, an answer?
Shut up and tell me. Go sleep and seek.
Random information is our lovely radio,
your eyes are holograms, ok? Believe me.
Try. Believe your knee, a decent gizmo
for all our walkathons. Gravity
creeps down the tree, every single leaf
is a tongue, capisce? And grass I saw
today, wheels and whole machineries of grass
spilling up the hillsides and there were fields
between me and the river, and big bare trees
soft as amber in the afterlight – a kind
of indecisive but compassionated gold.
Waiting for a table brings you close to history.
Blue caps on white water bay I am asleep.

20 January 2006

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so, things waiting. mosques
and entrances, steeples
I make with my fingers,
praying with my hands.

into the dark, with you.
as if a cave, you, pale
with fishes and a trim moon
setting so light comes in

everything mouth.
enclosures, mighty music
of being in. the drum
the flute all the stuff

they know to remember
my hands forget.
churches, everything church.
no way out from worship.

20 January 2006

ALLIES

Are you sure you're a person
not an animal? Look at your hands.
How much blood have they shed?
Do real people kill? Look at your eyes
in the mirror – look how far they go
inside, all the way back,
mountains and woods, can't you see
back there the campfire of the beginning?

You don't know who you are.
The blood when someone cuts you
or the moon makes you flow – what is that
water, why do you need so much of it,
and what do you do that makes it so red?

And if you lose so little of it
your life goes – why is that?
You don't know what's going on,
you only know you are a journey,
in winter, from a place
you can't remember to a destination
you can't imagine, no one
has ever told you its name.

Count the pores on your skin
some night when you have nothing to do
—they'll tell you the number of years
you've been traveling, one pore
for every hundred years. Only then
will you guess who I am
and why I want to go with you,
stumbling, cursing our shared ignorance.

21 January 2006

THE NEW CAPACITY

an old grain elevator
outside a dull town—
you know the picture,
flour dust all over everything
and the last lake dried up
a geology ago.

Still, we can stuff things in it,
snapshots, menthol rub,
my father's cat —Palm Cat—,
an empty notebook, brown
shoepolish, a comb with clean teeth.

There still is room, so much
some people want to measure it
in feet and syllables and versts
kilobytes, square meters, cents.

Let them. I sing
exclusively for my father's cat
and for the lady.

They make me be
the measure of myself,
dusty, but with wet hands,
midnight in a dull town
the light still on in my window.

21 January 2006

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Why are the lines longer these days?
Is it better breath? Or creeping prose?

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