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1.

Nothing reading
yet but listening
tiles on the floor
redoubtable lies
one after another
fitted into the mind,

the mind is a tile floor

all the stories he even
remembers transpose
to an old side porch
of a ramshackle yellow house
on the Delaware his
lifetime ago an old
roustabout who'd lost
toes in Alaska
told stories so you knew
they were lies and true
and beautiful and everything
you'd want words to be
all at once

2.

that was summer
telling, when stories should not
while the snakes are awake
so fiction began with a transgression
and that is all it ever is
these people happened to the world
because I say so

it violates
the sheer ontology by which we live
and do our plausible businesses,

so I have to drag in otherness
and dress it in smart clothes
and you have to like it better than the real.

1 July 2006

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Isn't it enough to be somebody else
without having to say so?

1 VII 06

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in the attempt things are lost
things are lost in the attempt
the amazement of the suitor at the bride suddenly surveyed
is equal to the bewilderment of the marriage broker
when nobody laughs as his jokes --
doesn't anybody understand?

it is all about miracles, like frogs
which our Egyptian masters used
to make a sign for life itself,
Itself, presumably
from the amphibious nature of the beast
alive on earth in water and on those delicate lotus leaves in between

and the transformations, we must transform,
we are tadpoles, Nietzsche tells us, that pharaoh of the Engadin,
tadpoles who must turn into frogs

because life is transformation
and all we ever need to do is sit still and change

he said and still nobody was laughing.

2 July 2006

PRESTER JOHN (1)

Ark in mountain

cist, or chest or
receptaculum arcanum arcani
noun after noun

the Parts of Speech are the Angelic Hierarchies,
choirs of angels

nouns are angels
verbs archangels

up to exclamations! which are the Seraphim
spinning, caught in ceaseless amazement round
the throne of original Mind

I explain this to you now
so Death can attend to other duties—
he is the usual instructor in this class
but while Death Takes a Holiday
(see several British films and remakes)
I am here to answer accurately
all the wrong questions you teem with
so begin.

Why did the missionary have doubts?
The shapes of certain leaves
struck him as monstrous,
incompatible with the Providential Arrangements
he had always envisaged and taught.

A leaf is enough.

Why does the Nile flow north?
To escape from the forests, to meet the north star,
and watch Orion eat his pomegranate above the sea
in cold weather,

every natural thing

is an abomination.

But where does he get such fruit in winter?

She has been with him always
like a deer at the side of the road.

Like a closed book in a rainstorm.
Like two inch nails found below a Roman wall.

Like Vanderbilt's old iron fence
broken over the empty railroad tracks.

2 July 2006

PRESTER JOHN (2)

You are I always wanted
white-cheeked
gazing out from the mesa—

serene you are
because it all is hidden in Africa

and in Africa everything is hidden
to save it from the light

come close and tell me about the Lord

*

Because he came here too
after those famous days

came among the quiet worlds
to talk about the closet
and the sky you find inside it when you pray

and the ocean pours out when you open the door.

2 July 2006

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All you have to do is breathe.
Each breath is light.
Breathe the light in.

Then let it accumulate
down there
in you, first cave and the last.

Breathe light.
Little breaths, like ordinary,
don't snort, it's not cocaine,

exciting, dangerous, expressive, rare.
It's air. It's everywhere
and all you need.

Don't measure it, just let it in:
as it comes through the fine
sculpture of your nostrils

(how lovely every face is when we look)
as it sifts up slowly into you
up on its way to down inside

the little breath turns into light.
You see it, you let it in,
you let it settle in the everywhere that's you inside.

The air that is everywhere
comes to be the you that is only you,
you think, and then you begin to wonder

if this air is light in me
it is so in everyone, we are all of one breath,
one great inhaling,

all filled with light.
And maybe the you that is not only you is listening
and hears the me that is not only me.

4 July 2006
Inter-dependence Day

= = = = =

I understand more than you think.
I understand more than I think.

It is a kind of rock
you find sometimes in the desert
needs two hands to lift,
your own and someone else's

finally you hold it in your hand
and it tells the future, vividly,
a girl picks it up, a boy
who dies, a beast who strays
from those who love him.

You have to wonder whose future it is,
is it yours, stored in the rock all those years
waiting for you?

Someone else's?

How can your hand, wise as it is,
tell future from past?
A hand knows nothing of time,

the lines in your palm change
in the light of their own moon that we cant see.

Something is free here, it isn't all written down,
isn't all spoken, fate from Latin *fatum*, perfect
of *fare*, 'to speak,' fate is what has been spoken

in us maybe when we look at anything.
Look hard. Like a frightened sailor at the sky.
Or the eyes of someone you've just met
and think: Can this be our first time together?
This isn't the first time I've looked into those eyes.

4 July 2006

THE FRIENDS

they don't need words
any more than animals do

they don't need sex
any more than a stone does

they are strong the way it is
any way it is,
present, present, famous
just for being there

and no words, because words
are the names of parts of things
we keep in mind so we can ask for them again,
—such as thigh, ball of the thumb,
small of the back, curve of lip—

but they have no parts
any more than air has

they are all one sort of thing
the thing they are

they have no selves
no more than an ocean has,

they move inside stillness
and have nothing more to know.

5 July 2006

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Scolding squirrel
at me for something
each of us irritates
the other, holds his ground

won't go till at last
one of us understands
why the presence of the other
spoils the sugar and the seed.

7 July 2006

= = = = =

the earth as live
this morning as a shell

I feel it scurrying beneath my feet
the scrolls of energy inscribing
mysteries below the lawn I walk on dumb

hurrying on its own love affairs
always hurrying to be here,

always, when we need,
all nutrient and dangerous and quick
and only we bring slowness to the rock

that by its nature moves faster than the sky.

7 July 2006

CUNEIFORM

Am I almost done?
When the ancient scribe
ran out of clay
the scripture ended.

But clay is ample
in an earthy world,
and fingers easy,
just piss on dirt

and press the god names in
and their adventures
in us as we try
to articulate the earth.

7 July 2006

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The singleness of the world.

Patch of sun in dense trees
behind my house a slope
a path runs up it Magadha 2000
years ago the same
and he is walking there now,
here now, I follow,
he's always walking on a quiet
path he's always waiting
sitting quiet with half
open eyes just round the next bend.

7 July 2006

MAHLER'S ELEVENTH

what the stone told me

music listens harder than people do

under trees silence is patient,
waits its turn to speak

a great Jerusalem hallelujah day
when silence speaks!

small cottage in the country
where a dying man recuperates
eaves listen to people listening

and now I know what buildings are:

accumulations of sonic memories,
all the words even spoken in them
engraved in stone or wood

resounding. It
hears everything.

7 July 2006

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I want to give you what I see in your
eyes when you look in through me

I want what love and art are the same in
always wanting – to *give* you everything you see.

7 July 2006

= = = = =

full of entity

the shadow fall of entity
 of a voice
 subtends

any place I can stand.

There is b , g a rock cliff,
a number,
 say there is a number
you can stand under

you can stick out your tongue, yeled, yalda,
a child, so that
you catch the drops of moisture
any number lets fall,

balsam, sap, amber,

but who is your daughter,
isn't she everyone?

 shadow of a voice
(a rock doesn't always fall,
 what does fall
always?)

 balsam of a voice

you hear
= my dream

this rock
indecipherable

but that one, over there, that one is blue
the way a beginning is,

entity is sort of Viennese,
this candle flame (it's morning)
this expensive tree
Freud brought with him to London
from the rivers that flow out of Eden

because often when he looked at it
it brought the sea to mind
but not overwhelmingly, like a seagull
maybe, screaming, a block away
down by the Danube canal,

o what a story (a city)
an old Jew listening to a gull
hundreds of miles from the sea

are you listening
this is all it has to tell, ever,
some number?

then over his thought there fell
the shadow of the air.

8 July 2006

JOHANNISBEER

red berry July bush bright
fat currant in sunlight Saint John's Berry
bleeding throat something to wound
to heal by happening

open the door and wait for music.
So much mouth.

8 July 2006

OTHERWISE

portico,
by the blond museum

lady you forgot your bricks
but I went inside
and among cool silences
stood before Isis her throne

your face above it
where the eyes, black, rimmed with blue
went back and back
I do not know how far inside

because I am still traveling
inward on.

8 July 2006