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HYMN IN APHASIA

Mother of mercy
our life our sweetness and our hope

it says in sudden hearing
as I walk from the stairs to the kitchen

why does it say that today—
so that I'll write it down now,
but why, from the end of the Salve Regina,
the monks' night tune

soft chant as they file out of chapel
around the cloister walk to bed
I hear at morning,

the mystery of what is heard,
the changeful nature
of when language speaks,
same becoming other, the mortal context.

Ahoy says no sailor.
Pervengit, 'it will rain'
but no language is left
where this means that,

I lost it on an island
a rock spur a nautilus
on the old woman's mantelpiece,
seals barking in the cove.

28 July 2006

CALCULUS

Pebbles in a little heap.
How many is a tree?
The girth of time
slenders also me.

A hotel in Germany again,
bear meat on the menu.
Who were you that year?

Memory is mosaic
ruin, all the glittering tiles
fallen from their narrative walls.

I finger them one by one
a storyless ecstasy,
someone's shining hair.

28 July 2006

HAGGADAH

The Jews are not people of a covenant or a law. The Jews are people of a story. The people of the story. Nobody can know the law complete. Everybody knows the story. The Jews – *Alljuda verbarre!* – will last as long as the story does.

28 July 2006

SOFT MORNING

comfort of not cold not hot
and not some sad between

a breeze on my knees:
a weightless girl
who whispers in my ear
what I'm supposed to dictate
so she can type it out
using my fingers.

28 July 2006

TWO

There are two.
Two identities,

There is one in 'eternity'
and one here and now.

To make them one = soulmaking.

The terrible burden of the teacher who has taught for some years: to see the Eternal Identity of the student before you, glum or glorious showing through the temporal person.

The wonderful privilege of the teacher is to teach that Eternal Person, usually but not always fighting desperately with the Temporal.

But these words mislead. Eternal does not mean everlasting – it means outside of time, outside of the limits of circumstance. When I say temporal I should really say limited, conditioned, the person as he or she takes him/herself to be.

29 July 2006

ANSWERS TO A LOST QUESTIONNAIRE

1. There will always be some names I forget.
2. Metal will tend to oxidize.
3. A fox lives up behind the summerhouse
4. Food set out at night feeds the Little People, who will tend to take unexpected forms.
5. A lesbian unicorn.
6. I never met a king, but I like Chilperic's name.
7. Vercingetorix.
8. Anti-clericalism as practiced in Colombia in the early 20th Century. Or Mexico.
9. Ink.
10. Woods.
11. Late autumn afternoon sunlight in trees.
12. Rubies. But star sapphires were first – is asterism viable?
13. Blue in general.
14. Odd numbers.
15. Seventeen.
16. Chaucer's *Boke of the Duchesse*.
17. Samson, but told a different way.
18. A rope dangling down.
19. Ambiguous smile, like Mojave.
20. Anything I can feel.
21. Car parked under maple tree.
22. A book with every other page blank.
23. Turkish.
24. North.
25. Touch.
26. The alphabet. Or anesthesia.
27. But sometimes wholesome, e.g. yogurt.
28. A million little towns don't make a city, they just make a world.
29. A city.

30. The moon though invisible.

31. Licking it.

32. In the cellar, cool, a little light left on.

30 July 2006

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Virtuous entry – schoolbook.
The carpenter does not arrive.
Did not arrive. Will not arrive.
Yesterday is tomorrow. Today
is the grammar of the world
let loose on our poor things.

31 July 2006

HERESY

Novatian was a famous heretic.
What did he teach? Don't know
where he went wrong, I was just
sitting there on the porch
dozing while he was preaching.
When I woke, everything round me
was orthodox again but sin had been.
I missed my chance to be wrong,
the only hope a man ever has.

Because women are wrong all the time,
right? That is our measure, the moon
belongs to us, we take it off and hide it
doing secret things where you can't see.
The closest you can come is heresy,
a pleasing dark of the moon, a lull
in fierce bright weather, your rulebook sun.

31 July 2006

ARGUMENTUM COSMETICUM

Let the new glamour
powder the old face
and lo! the sun rises!

We know it's really the old moon
went to the dark spa last night
and comes back made over –

what nonsense to think there could be two,
two lights in the sky,
two gods in the world –

all those stars are just the fresh glitter in her hair.

31 July 2006