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There is faltering.
Falling too. And lying there
when one has fall'n.

And the whole sky
to look at then
suddenly free to attend

to nothing else but that.
How close suddenly
the sky is. Empty

of all you expected,
suspected, hoped.
But bright as ever

endlessly close.
There is being there
with that,

staring at it
till the sky itself
is ashamed and looks away.

19 October 2006

= = = = =

If the stone were all I think I am
it would crack and let an animal out

nobody every saw before the color
of it alone would make you happy. And the smell!

19 October 2006

= = = = =

If just one of them comes right
it will be enough.

The dead will crowd aboard
the scarcely weighed down skill
skims over the dingy water,
cold water. The sinister gondolier
sings at his work, he's
the only one doing anything,
the rest of them are just being
—dead, reeds, birds, water, light—
passive witnesses to their fate.

Did it get it right?
Where do I stand to watch?

Even the dead flee me,
lured on by his clownish music.
No birds. I thought they were
dancing in the wind the way they do.
But not. Something else
or some other things. Were moving.

Is it right yet?
Can you see it with your skin?

20 October 2006

= = = = =

for A.L.

You who after all my years of Greek
taught me it was clematis,
and you
upon whose lawn a week ago
in hasty autumn evening sunlight
a ripe red amanita muscaria mushroom
was spotted growing,
white-pebbled, shaman's flower
that needs no plant beneath it
just the earth
which you also tend,
and you
who are by no means in my mind
constrained to vegetative presidencies,
not at all, you are a magistrate of mind
in fact,
summoned by human feelings to know
and to a fine anatomy of articulation
speak bone by bone as if we had such things
also (also!) *in petto* when we talk
earnest casual about such matters
(flowers, the thrill of mind, the names
of this and that)
'nattering,' you like to say,
talking in fact of what the French
called "broken sticks," this and that
and everything between we'd say,
wordier Americans, clematis after all
just means stick, or sticks,
finally
I did look it up,
so-called from the spindly
disposition of the twigs
that bear, almost preposterously, such huge
august purple flowers,
you know their *bâtons rompus*
are just the material one needs
to exaggerate with music an incident to Iliad
and make our foolish bloodshed make some sense,

make, make, how proud one is,
to set, one stick across another and pretend
to have a house, a crucifix, or (such is our need)
a new letter of the alphabet

that sounds what we have never said,
and really write with it, really make it such
that other people –for whom after all and only
does the whole game play out if not for them?—
actually can read

the new thing that you write,
and let what they read compel them towards
a larger –or is it smaller,
elmless now, though with a southern vista,
near a river— garden,

the point being
I suppose that whatever else it is
geology is never far away
from where we stand reciting,

you taught me this.

21 October 2006

= = = = =

Love is that frenzy where desire and permission
grow confused. Eden burnt down every night by us.
Angel at the ruined door, bearing an extinguished sword.

21 October 2006

= = = = =

Count carefully
and then pronounce
the First Number
comes into your head

it will be close enough
the way Bach's organic thought
sounded out sounds
not at all like
the mathematics from which it grew

soft fruit in its season
leaps from the rigid tree.

All art is fugitive.

21 October 2006

= = = = =

Rhyme royal
just remember on the other hand
 Marian.
She had red hair— that was enough.

And the wood was green –
no uncle could make it flame.

Tonight's a dragon. Or an interrupted bishop
laying down the law

the language licks his lips, he swoons
into what he says.

 fainting among believers,
among the peeling sycamores.

21 October 2006

= = = = =

Then one of us turned into a woman
no, you were a woman all along
and I wasn't there until that moment
when at the window the curtain
lifted from the sheer weight of light
and fell. It had snowed that night
no, it looked as if it had but I reached
down and felt it, dry soft seeds
not the least bit cold. When one of us
did whatever was done the other
had to do too, perforce like the old
books say, and we did and it was done,
no, it did it all by itself and we
as usual were just along for the ride.

21 October 2006

A GOSPEL FRAGMENT DREAMT

Theological speculation ratified by blood.
Rather like Christ. At table
they sat and argued what they ate.
Was it He or another or something else?
Yes. Once a man has died
he becomes everyone. And even more so
when he comes back to life. And we.

21/22 October 2006

PICUS

Look the word up ere it lose thee
woodpeckers woke me

house of wood it doesn't
tell apart

ego arbor

I am its tree now and then I see it
flitting, a lot of him this a.m.,
Picus, 'Mavortis ornis' bird of Mars.

But then (now) everything is like Christ
looked at the right way,
the flame around the heart, say, or the color,
always the color tells

trees half-leafless now the sun pours in
and now at night Orion strides—

but isn't there another word
for sky
or how he moves
or who he is?

We pound on things with beaks.
We penetrate
by interpretation
we feed

by wood we wit.

But the other word,
the one you haven't
looked up yet, how impatient you are,
to let your lap be sunset
and a star,
all those myriad (means ten
thousand) rhythms leading
to just those quick breaths,
hurrying
to the point,
the point that is nowhere,

but a nowhere that is a swelling,
a charge of blood
suffusing the sky of the face and
it is a little bird pecking the side of my house.

22 October 2006

= = = = =

But who watches?
Watches us like clocks
waiting for the features on our faces
to align,
 line up
at some angle they understand
but we do not,
 the *time*
they think it is
when we think we are someone
and to them we're just
an intersection of now and never
when something is supposed to happen.
And something happens.

22 October 2006

GALLERY

To plot out the removal
of one thing, a line

or say: one color from the day
abstract and leave the rest

would you be a river boat then
or an otter or a mandolin

heavy-thumbed in the Italian garden
while you wait for food

dumb as a prince before his jester
always waiting for the man to fail?

We are frowns waiting for a face,
we are some art. White

shows me best, so I am white
with undercoat of green

to make you see the shadows
tell you this man has been around

has seen and sometimes witnessed
yet what he's seen escapes him

even now no better than before
yet here he is. You shake my hand.

You've gotten one out now so
name the empty space where color was.

Live in it cool as a museum
quietly by night. Don't walk

near the lines. What they say
is absolute as Mondriaan,

undiscussable, accurate, true.

No way unmake a mark,

it's like an animal, its quality
has nothing to do with its essence,

its essence just is. Remember that
the next time you see me trying

hard to talk to you without a sound.
Or make any other line but this.

22 October 2006

THE AFTERFALL

or common dance.

Its measure knows us
Halloween. Those flat cardboard jointed
grinning skeletons we used to unfold
and jiggle in the window

we love death's bony lute
to listen,
the saltine crunchy rattle
of his elements,

a skinny man made all of chalk
teaches juicy us to dance
the longest foxtrot,

the dodder, the touch me touch me not.

22 October 2006

MENSCHLICH,

the uniform

men doff their caps when anthem played
but soldiers and policemen not
a uniform makes them different from a man

investigate the Mensch, the human sort
about which or whom though we are one
we do keep speculating on and on as if

as if thinking and dreaming about what one is
is what one is, and no better way
to analyze the beast than raw analysis

dreams cloud shapes leaf densities of autumn
woods held in sharp focus all the way to the dusk
and there he is, they are, in amber, the one of one,

the mirror running towards us with tears in its eyes.

23 October 2006

VESTIGIA

sky break
bottle act
the wind is inside
kept inside keeping
where the wind will never

yet it howls now night
and the sky gets in

the sky is a thief
who studies our ways

the animals with breasts
down here analysis

favorable. North wind
in a green day

whenever we leave our house
a stranger slips in the window

we are investigated
a starry agent
turns the pages of my notebook
at noon on earth

when he is dreaming back on his own

*

or it is never noon
and the bell tells lies
like common things—

but study the shadows that things let fall:
shadows tell the truth

*

the real shape of anything is what it does to the light
the real emperor of Aleman is sleeping inside the rock
go out and tug on the boughs of an old white pine

give it a shake, that's him, he'll wake
and go marching to Jerusalem again.

*

because a tree is a doorbell thing
an agency or attendant to
the long agony we administer
by ignoring her or whom on which we walk

Touching a tree
is like phoning your mother

when you fall asleep tonight
you hear her call your name.

25 October 2006