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A woman of a certain age
half Lotte Lenya –but not she
whom I met once fifty years ago—
half Rosmarie Waldrop but even small,
bird-boned, like Ursule Molinaro
but younger, with red hair,
started singing me a song I knew
probably some Brecht and then I asked
if she knew the one where a leg
gets broken, *Beine gebrochen*,
a song a young girl taught me once.
She did she says and says she'll sing it
in my ear. But I'd have to hold you
to my ear I said, hold me hold me
and I did so she could descant
into my good right ear
the song I couldn't seem to hum
or get started, I knew it, why couldn't
I get it going, I waited for her
to begin, my hands holding each other
behind her back so as not to
touch her, a woman
who was just a song from someone else,
I couldn't get it started in me,
I waited and I'm waiting still,
woke up and understood there was
no such song no girl once taught me
no woman of any age to sing it, no bone.

16 November 2006
[dream transcript]

= = = = =

I'm sitting where I never sat
staring straight at the rock ledge
winter-shattered shale, blank tablets
fallen, marked with the law before the Law.

Mild November after all this cold.
Near the road, in noise but not in sight.
I belong to this rock, I think
and then suppose I mean this rock

belongs to me, an old piece of paper
says so. But that's not what I mean,
I mean what was first said, that's
the truth, the truth of the matter.

Matter. The same certainty
the blank slates so volubly explain.
It was here to meet us. Mother.
I am sitting at last at your side.

16 November 2006

= = = = =

Caption. To fit under you
and explain
what you're thinking when you do
whatever you do,

words like the shadow of a hip or hand
moved – as to strike,
or dance or just be gone—
saying what has to be said.

So little. So much understood.
I know what you mean
but am not confident in what I know.
Tell me. As if I could believe the words.

16 November 2006

= = = = =

All of most unwearing
the combat hardened vocabulary
strung by the spittle on whose lips

some girl once kissed.
Now who. Now what.
The chatter rumble of a passing tank

alarms the feeding crows
but not much. They've seen it all.
Have you ever seen

the inside of a human torso
suddenly opened to the rape of light?
This needs you, a sight

from the hell we have inside
neatly packed and always red.
Always hot.

Until that sudden day comes in.
Eyesight. Memory.
A church without a single stone.

17 November 2006

THE FRENCHMAN'S DREAM

In the Frenchman's dream he wants to be me,
he wakes up and finds he isn't.
Shit. Still him. Still French.

On the other hand I'm still me.
Scarlet bougainvillea around my shoulders
I impersonate a beach house in Malibu.

I slip off the carpet and drown
almost. He saves me, Frenchmen
make good swimmers. We eat lunch,

I am weary of his company already
as I bet he is of mine. What to do with us now.
Dream. Dream always makes sense.

Dream always works. I dream of a fish
four feet long and silvery blue
coming for us all beneath the sea

but shallowly, coming to tell us something
we need to know. I dream we know it
already so I can go on dreaming I'm asleep.

17 November 2006

= = = = =

As if there were more of them there than
the ones we pretend to be and go move
skating along the sidewalk to the opera
as if all these trees and ponds and rocks
somehow concealed, revealed, a city

an urban intricacy to the fall of shade,
street address of this maple tree. Stop.
Nothing is like anything else really,
all this likeness must come to an end
and then we'll be who we are again

or (more likely) for the first time ever
you and you and you and you and me
distinct as pebbles on a shingle beach
all brought by the same sea to gather
for some inconceivable purpose it

makes me sleepy even to try to imagine.

17 November 2006

THE MONKEY'S HAND

is always there. N, E, W, S,
they call them quadrumane,
four-handed, any direction
you travel the hand
is waiting for you.
The grasper, the caresser,
the curious, the blow.
The phalanxes arranged to know.
Or strike down. Or comb
your fur too. We
belong to our bones evidently
as a hand belongs to
everything it can do.

18 November 2006

= = = = =

So in that country where the offices
boom under earth like submarines
bringing hand-painted china from Majorca
and crows flow past the windows
warning the inside world to mend its words

everything is color and everything moves
what more has science told you than that?
Plus some fancy ways of using things
to make other things and how to talk
to more people who still don't want to listen.

But how good everything new is! The gold
braid on the executioner's kepi, the blue
shadows below the corpse's chin, some joy
is hidden there for you that only the living
know how to find.

So stay here with me.
Survivor's anthem: take pleasure in the swift
way things get lost. the slowness of what stays.
Your tears keep your eyes healthy.
And make you more like god.

18 November 2006

= = = = =

The angular incidence
of planet influence
disarmed my grief—
I would die like every

and the light would still
be falling through the apple
tree on somebody
faithful as an old song

and hateful too the way
you can't remember
all the words of something
you can't completely forget.

18 November 2006

= = = =

Asafetida maybe. A smell
from a long time. But this life,
my life.

A small iron pan
over open flame. Scatter
seeds on it, some oil.
And then the smell.
The mind that's all remind.

19 November 2006

= = = = =

How could I have held the rock
and pulled it over me like a blanket
and slept 800 years. Eight hundred more.
And wake now with a flower in my teeth,
blue-sepaled, smell of a headache
and I roar. I have come for you again.

(There was a language before or under Gaelic. This comes from those dark words.)

19 November 2006

= = = = =

Hold me lantern. It was a leaf
growing on a stick. The stick in the ground.
The leaf is the lamp. The green
is a flame. What kind of thing
is a thing? It is a boat. Or a stone.

19 November 2006

= = = = =

No more to shoot. The film
has been shorted. Sleeps
in the mind's eye secure.
Like Saint Augustine tutoyer-ing God.
It is a way we have
when we are spent. Went. Spilled
into images and we

from whom all images flow out
are nothing but sketchy caves,
hollow inlets in sleeping rock.
Will it ever wake or answer back.
Nothing left in me to shoot.

20 November 2006

= = = = =

On or the mysteries maybe—
a man standing by the side of the road

— what greater enigma is there than that?
This. The man. The road.

And that we pass. So quick so quick we
say What a mystery is this, a man

standing while we're going.
A man by the road. Standing. An absolute.

20 November 2006

= = = = =

Sometimes more than others
a smooth remember.
Gold plate this pen
to write the sun—
it all was figured out
last Thursday night
a thousand years ago why
city streets are so dingy
miserable midnight light
we opt for ugly oft.

21 November 2006

= = = = =

Comfort in what's wrong.
Banners of cloud droop
over lost battles – the losers
rot in the furrows the winners
limp home bleeding carrying plague.
We see them every night
on every city street
even dawn never dries
the pus and lymph of their footprints.
Why war all the time?
Why ugly room and shitty street?
We learned the answer Thursday night
and forgot it Friday morning,
remember it again,
a barnacle be it
on the bleak mind
salt-washed sand-forgot
the yucky miracle of every day
leaches out of me in sunlight
the first in days, of course I want
the grove of Eden now, goat cheese,
dead leaves, girls singing to no flute.

21 November 2006

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Too small to wait
the abbreviated uncurl
of the tulip whereas
by now another
flower surely would
have splayed
out in surrender.
I hold what holds.

21 November 2006

= = = = =

Something to work through.
A friend carrying a blanket.
Window full of daylight.
Anything begins here. I follow
to the end and declare
what I find at the road's end
is the side of the road.
It is gold. I am allowed
the defining. I have a morning
caught in my teeth
accordingly. Wind
wiggling around in rhododendron.
Everything wants to be Bach.

21 November 2006

CADENZA

As at the downpressed bow releasing
as it seems from long captivity a tone
that comes out and not even bothering to look around
finds you, right there,
where it was going anyhow, and you just by your fate
happening to be its target, its captured mind,

fills you. Is music what it is?
Or is it what it makes us think about as it goes by?

21 November 2006

= = = = =

“in the high [troche or dactyl]
the uninterrupted rapture of the day”

it said in dream and I woke.
Who talks like that? Who was I, hearing?

21/22 XI 06 / Dream