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There is a light below the light
that turns me to stone.

The stone I am
grinds grain. The grain is you.

See how a horror story
is made of the simplest
predications. Two doubtful
entities round a copula.

X is Y, we used to say,
if and only if some other
condition obtains. Obtains
means be, be there,

be there for me. The state
of being water, water
also is a kind of stone.
A kind of light.

8 November 2005

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Imagine energy as a blue machine
humming under your bed. Remember
doors opening in the night,
worry about cats getting trapped in the well.
You have no well, no cat, but even so.
Worry has its own work to do in the world.

The machine wakes you with its hum,
now you have enough vim to climb out of bed
and up the steep mountain of the day,
cling to tough little bushes on the scree slope
while minutes gravel out beneath you down and down.

You're almost now. It is autumn at the top,
a plateau of brown leaves forever
and not one tree for them to come from.

Heaven too decays and leaves its evidence.
Later, when you bend to drink from a rock pool
you close your eyes, afraid to see
what has become of your face.

9 November 2005

"Emptiness is full of itself"

--Liz Buryk

I have a real feel
for what the woman means.
When I'm on empty
I'm full of myself.

Or a self is a thing
only when nothing else is going on
so when the movie for
instance is enthralling

you get enthralled, that is
your self is in the jail
called: all your attention
focused out there. Where also

nothing is. And this too
is full of itself. You love it.
But it doesn't love you back.
That kind of emptiness only loves itself.

9 November 2005

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Thorazine almost rhymes with Morzine
near where we stay now and then, French Alps,
not a croissant for miles but intricate cheeses
and paths uphill past the ancient lazaretto
till the trees are done. It is another country
inside another country – we usually stay home
counting the knick-knacks on the chimneypiece
--the book says bibelots—and watching clouds
give way to little streaks of rain on the gizmo
that tells our weather in Celsius and hectopascals.

Being in another country means it's harder
for death to find you unless – appointment in Samarra—
death has the whole thing planned already,
watches over you while you book your Orbitz flight,
snickers at the Club Med brochure he himself
sneaks into your underwear drawer to make you dream.

Unless death is, after all, nothing but
the Commissar of Itineraries, deciding
where we go and what happens to us there.

Nothing maybe. Birds singing. Your daughter
calls from the States. The Prime Minister
is talking on television with fine gestures

of his broad flat hands and you still don't get it
for all his careful diction. Lies sound the same
in every language. Later you find a book
drenched in a rainpuddle. A dictionary
of yet another tongue death speaks all too well.

9 November 2005

BORING POETRY

*--an epitaph for the last issue of **Chain***

Poetry bores you to death.

Poetry bores right through your death
and makes a tunnel through living trees
where poetry boars grunt and hum
and hump around the meadows.

Mellifluousness. Linden blossom tea,
the whole spring creation
standing on its head. Vernation.

The benefits of printing boring poems:
it's so boring you gasp with amazement,
how can any words be so boring!
then you notice your amazement.

I am amazed! This strange publication
has amazed me! How long it's been
since poetry amazed me! Billy Collins
has never done that, Ted Kooser soothes us
and here I am, alive, angry and amazed
and looking around for a fight,
wow! There must be something wonderful
about boring poetry. It doesn't croon,
doesn't lyric, swoons us past death
with a rattle of imaginary chains.

Constraints. Boring as ghosts.

Boring as Christmas.

10 November 2005

MERVILLE ODES

1.

Because of the slow revolving
the blue matter tucked inside the star
sometimes squeezes out—
this is the origin of photography

which Dr Reich discovered some years
later as blue sparks visible
in the night even the day sky
when considered through a long cardboard tube

much longer than what keeps your paper towels
from crunchdom and unspooling spill
and painted black inside and then oh my
how many lights you see and these

make little pictures in your eye
which after you mistake for women lampposts
mailmen little dogs and SUVs
tooling about your little neighborhood

o Christ how little we all are
compared to or faced with those blue glints
or flakes of real reality shoveled from up there
wait I have a snapshot in my hand

that really shows my hand.

2.

Mecause of tu –

the bling-blank mother lode

of rhinestones in

the pressure factory

spins genuine diamongs.

So much is true.

So much is true there is no room left

for my cushioning falsehoods,

the thighs of Swedish women,

the memory of Slavic memory

as wielded by the White Sea

(the Kola Peninsula) writer

John of Bobrow in another *yazyk*.

Or paltering polonies,

midrash of frenzied Indians –

even the Hopi are goyim–

and I detect the friend of a friend

shooing random cats out of a stray house.

3.

Everything belongs to me, no?
Everything but you
who are no thing, hence can't
belong, canst barely be

in this blue Osmanli winter
churches in domes domes in snow
they leap across the voices of the children
singing womanwise in the sacred place

behind the iconostasis. Now you know.
You are just some voices in my head,
women imitating men. Men
imitating me. And all of it a trick

God plays on the world and never tires of.

4.

Because we see brick better than stone
because a street glistening with rain
is already a compromise with theology
and the red lights (no-color in your images
just brightnesses) on carriages
are really gleams of sunshine maybe
on the bright day the process required

and no one passed. Because we see
a street better than a road, a house
better than a hill, an actress up there
on the screen better than our mother.

5.

Keep thinking that means something,
doesn't. Play of light on surface
sensitive to light. Play of dark
on what we try to remember.
Every photograph is a terrible aphasia.

6.

What could it speak if it were only a color
and nothing in our hands not even a stick
to point to the wall with Here Be Image
and it is only something moving that you make stop?
A picture is something moving you make stop.

10 November 2005

CORDYCEPS

certain holy mushroom havers
stomp the things on bronze metates
--lest stone itself get stoned--
the metal knows how to stay
inside itself – all metals do
save steel – infected with diamond
as it is – and pure quicksilver
which wants to be every single thing
it touches. Just like me.
But this Asian fungus Doctor
Weil keeps saying is so good for you
does not seem to raise the mind's
Venetian blinds on alternate
argosies sailing your way very fast.
Only hope does that, and complex
alkaloids. This pounded mush
is bitter as Sunday getting out of bed
and hurrying to church. Luminous
children gibber at you as you pass.

10 November 2005

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Determining to be less
as a maple samara
clings to the porch table's
metal fretwork
under the few almost
invisible glints of the
first snow, things
forgiving things into the dark.

10 November 2005

TOWARDS AN URBAN RELIGION

Who *was* blue after all
among all those 'gold ascensions'
(what a pretentious title!)
we used to call Elevator Girls
who told you what floor you wanted
and brought you right there
with a turn of their broad gentle wheel
or pushed a button. Now they
trust us to get there ourselves
and no Mr Blue at the beginning
and no Mrs Gold at the top—
we're in heaven but we're all alone.
I cant help it, I'm from this city,
of course I have a Bloomingdale's theology
and when I think of beautiful lost things
I think of Loeser's, Gimbel's, Altman's
most of all, the lovely sites of ascension
where mothers took us to the high places
where only one waxy floor walker
was left of the brutal masculine world below.
And he wore a mustache and smelled of violets
and smiled like a carnation and in our hearts
we were glad and thought: Shopping
with you is being close to God.

11 November 2005

FRIVOLISTE MANIFESTO

So I woke taking picture after picture of your face
just your face against the dark blue velvet backdrop
I'd draped down over the bookcase
over the Meredith and De Quincey and Powys.

This is the moment to make light of it:
to skin the light off everything
and keep it safe, offer it to absolutely everyone,
the sheer layer of beauty that lies

over and about the frantic bones beneath.

11 November 2005

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Misspelling the sound. *Muspelheim*.

There are dark cold places,
there are hells. It's mostly
mythology where we live,
we live inside
the bitter brackets of the old stories,
the tragedies from which we cannot escape
playing our dumb parts
cockprong revenges the tooth of love.

11 November 2005

LORCA

I used to think Lorca was wonderful
because he wrote only about things
that were permanent.

But now the only permanent things
are sex and war.

Nothing grows anymore
on the hill, the roads
are underground,
there are no trees,
Persephone comes no more,
there is no more moon.

Remember when there was
an animal, say, and water
moved by itself
alongside the field, along the road.

Bare rock, caribou
on the tundra, mountain,
remember moss?

We write about them
to make them seem
a permanent part
of all there is.

But there is no moon,
the roads have run away from us,
no animals to teach us,
it is just like the terrible time of Homer again,
nothing but sex and war
and from them alone we have to make
some sounds some people want to sing.

11 November 2005

"We had to go on living"

--James Wright, via Brendan Kenneally

She squeezed us out and said Live!

We said I'm sorry I hurt you.

She said It's over now, just live.

But it's hard to live, we said,

seeing the pain we gave you.

Forget it, she said, the pain is asleep now,

don't wake it with your worrying.

So we tried. We crawled

across the crib, the floor, the room, stood,

hid in the closet, fell down, got up, got dressed,

went out, got drunk got laid,

came home and said I'm sorry, I'm sorry.

She said, Live, I told you, do it,

it doesn't matter what you think,

it doesn't hurt me any more

and if it did I'd never tell you,

don't try to crawl back inside the pain,

it's over. Nothing's over, we said,

I don't know what to do, what I can do.

It's easy, she cried, just live.

11 November 2005

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Somebody say me
please, will it be
the field of corn
by Elmendorph's Flats
where you can see the stars
as good as Kansas

and that makes the whole
earth there seem important
connected, in touch
with everything

sometimes I get out of my car
at midnight and look up
in Orion season
and the handful of jewels
the sisters scatter
I try to catch them
and just trying
brings good dreams
and I slip towards sleep
wondering whether woman
is one word or two.

11 November 2005

COSINE

Values given

in a dense table.

In Pisa the great fresco

Triumph of Death by Buffalmacco

that woman



at the right of the procession

her gown green in all that umber

looking away from the three corpses and the palavering hermit

is looking at me.

She and I in all the world

are not listening to the dreary sermon,

we do not believe in all this dying

and the thinking that leads there,

she is coming closer to me all the time.

The geometry of the world

joined with our unbelief

will make us touch and when we join

there will be no more death.

11 November 2005