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As if we knew how to do it
even, as if the candle
could light itself or the wind
read the paper it worries in my hand

as if the phone could decide when to ring
and tell me something nobody knows
and I'll forget as soon as it's said
in one ear and gone into the world

I am a wastrel and the wind
shrugs and walks away to the school of trees
whispering on the hill, maples
though one tall walnut tree

bombards the yard with green-husked nuts
that rot brown-black everywhere I walk
as if I'd notice that at least
in all this crumbing commonwealth of time.

12 November 2005

MIXTURES

The chemist falters.
A crystal really is
a machine, we just
can't see its gears
move – my burden's
light said
Christ the diamond.

The chemist tries
so many forgeries
to blend the perfect truth.
Bertnouilli's theorem
washes the children
out to sea. Even dream
will not help them now.
Elements of viscosity
confuse the chemistry.

12 November 2005

=====

Sometimes numbers make mistakes
and seven isn't what it used to be.
Seven gets dreamy, starts counting
the leaves on this ash tree here
and gets to 6,743 before it yield to Eight
so the whole system comes to grief
and our hands between us have
fourteen thousand busy fingers.

12 November 2005

=====

There is a market where it's done.

Come there with me - -

they pierce your eyes with a new kind of light

and everything looks different ever after

so people look at you and say

See, she has seen something we cannot see.

12 November 2005

=====

We really are mixtures aren't we?

And the parts of any mixture, no matter how much love,
are always afraid of each other - -

give me an hour, dearest love, then set me free.

12 November 2005

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Blindness comes true.

The mailman brings it
says This is sunlight, sir,
you ordered it,

you voted for it in the booth
in the Church Hall for District 3
and now it fills your trees
and makes you wince.

You wanted to be everyone,
wanted to play your part
now here it is all round you
and all you can do is shut your eyes.

12 November 2005

SISYPHUS

Why doesn't water flow downhill?

The hill is holding its breath.

Who turned off gravity tonight?

It was the moon in the man

he does such things, the fickleness,

Now we have to apply

artificial respiration to the mountain.

And while you're at it

make it breathe in synch with me.

12 November 2005

=====

Still close enough to reason
or have a reason
a blue dahlia like the movie
night club or the blue
moon broken down café
at Weys Corners 40 years ago
we knew their names then
and all their sordid businesses
the 1930s never ended in America
all of us afraid of animals
(hence of Darwin) all of us
afraid of foreigners because
all of us are. America
I think is Mirrorland
and you know who you see in mirrors
blonde woman in a blue café
lasts as long as Byzantium
a pink rubber spaldeen
rebounds off the church steps—
shall we call this theology
or is a little kid in dungarees
a subtle agent of that *Other Power*
who made the earth round
and makes balls bounce?

12 November 2005

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Count the animals leaving the ark.

Multiply by raindrops.

No wonder there is so little room,
so many mouths to feed.

Would it all have happened
if we had never learned to count?

12 XI 05

=====

The coronation march from Meyerbeer's
John of Leyden is playing now
a music I first heard as a kid in Union City
as the recessional after a Passion Play.
How pink Christ's flesh was on the cross!
Just like mine! I'll never get over it.

12 November 2005

=====

But all I hear comes from somewhere else.

I say: I hear it in my head

but what is my head listening to?

What Budapest café is buzzing with words

I don't understand at all but keep

listening, watching the women sway,

trying to hear their hips as English,

writing it down? There are so many

mistakes by which I live.

12 November 2005

CITY

And this answers these.

Queen of Diamonds

walking down Madison—

she knows the whole city

is inside a Temple

but so few know (she knows)

where the altar is

and what the priest is like

who says such dark

effective quiet prayers

beneath the never-ending hum.

12 November 2005

=====

What is dangerous? Is this?

We climbed the stairs together
to the little room that no one owned

and fondled the darkness one by one
till all the light left hid in the window
then there were voices outside

we lay side by side and heard them
and each thought "I could just as well
be with that one out there."

There is no end to people in the world.

12 November 2005

LEAVINGS

1.

What's left of what's left?

Iron filings

a magnet shapes

to spell my new name.

I will be anyone

the harmonian cosmos tells me to be,

I will read my destiny

in the slightest arrangement, rearrangement,

how leaves lie on the porch table.

How the clouds walk.

12 November 2005

LEAVINGS

2.

Is there anything left for the sailor?

Not a river, not a steamer.

We had sails but we made skirts from them
and skirts were flags enough for all our wars.

Men climb up the tree to fetch fruit
and sue for kisses if they throw it down.

The heart hurries to such islands—
and who am I it leaves behind?

12 November 2005

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Small streams show the way –
we can do that too,
murmur, hurry, join
in something larger, disappear.

13 November 2005

COMMA FAULTS

the teachers called it
when the voice went on
right through the sentence
over all the obstacles
of decorum and decision –
the voice never decides,
a voice goes on,
leaves it to the ears to tell
and tell the difference.

13 November 2005

=====

The children hold them in school
hold them to their lips.
Their fingers gradually get the point
step by step like a goat
walking over a rope bridge
over the quick river so far below
delicately dangerous: the alphabet.

13 November 2005

for Joseph Massey's *Bramble* (a book of lunes)

reading your book

suddenly

I was writing it.

13 XI 05

=====

Nothing left from the original deposit
a sine-wave caught in sediment
sandstone fossil music
the climbers grow enamored of, and fall.

13 XI 05

TARPEIAN ROCK

Throwing traitors off the cliff
we all go first.

13 November 2005

=====

I keep trying to answer
nobody's question.

13 XI 05

=====

Roses on the table
know
their own Shoah
coming,
remembering
the light that
coaxes then withers them.

13 XI 05

=====

So many seductions
without even a France
to tourist in, not even
a Venice to wet our thighs.
Sunlight is enough too much.

13 XI 05

=====

But why did they wait?

Why did a fly

rest at peace on the windowpane

and leave the cupcake on the sideboard alone?

Why do things not happen?

Even catastrophes are unreliable.

Even death.

Sometimes nothing happens.

13 November 2005