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WATCHING WATER

To own the sight of you cavorting
downhill quick but mildly sloping
is *real estate*, the real condition
of this real place. Wonderland
anywhere. Everywhere
where there is shadow
and shadows play, and all
their moves are Aeschylus,
primal drama. And water
is the shadow of what? Earth
is the shadow of water, we know,
lingers after the lucid primary
runs past to be together with its
largest self, Ocean, the majority.
I know all this today about
earth and water because it let me
sit at the upstairs window watching
the Sawkill nimble past rich with rain,
foaming as it hits the bend and slides
round it to the first cataract past the pool
where frequent heron stand and deer drink
then half a mile down the sluice of bare trees
on its way to the everlasting Nile.

1 December 2005

DREAMNESS

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I'm beginning to think I'm having a dream life.
I can't remember anything specific,
no face looming out of the dark, no action, no voice.
Just a sense that there is something else,
something *recent and out of sight*, that happened to me
or that I happened. So just now when I stoop
to flush the toilet I dimly know
that not long ago, a few hours at most,
in another world, another land I flushed one too,
just some common stupid ordinary act
in a land there I am happening or being processed
or even instructed or wooed or imprisoned,
how can I tell, and I can't tell.

+++++

But what if I woke up some morning
back in Manhasset on the winter sea
dazzled by the blue Christmas lights on the blue spruces
sturdy plump and regular in new snow

on the lawn of my Uncle Benjamin's big house
white and big and modern as the snow
and I didn't know what to do next
and I'd have to go back to school
and live subject to my mother and father
and I barely know who they are
or where is my house now
when all of them are dead and even the snow is gone?
The horror of wake up,
that's what I mean,
when all of this
this life of pain and glory and wonder and mistake
proves to have been a moment's dream
and I'm back there again,
anywhere, but that's the when/where
I keep coming back to, my Uncle Benjamin's house,
I don't even know how old I was, or am,
or why that memory, those spruces,
those classy blue lights when all the rest of us peons had rainbow
lights, how austere and beautiful and rich,
why that, why then, why him, why there?
Why now?

1 December 2005

= = = = =

But there are wings.
The springs of dandelion
are all unwound, the striped lily
sleeps by the garage.

Nothing feels.
That's what winter wants,
a journalism of despair
until a cup of tea

–hot, Japanese green –
fits in your hand
to warm your fingers
more than lips.

Smell of some southern
perfume, like smoke
born inside the body,
patchouli I think.

We will survive
gossamer nightmares,
high treason, sliffish
animals. Survive, we,

will. There are wings
to take us there,
rings to wear
to invoke the lords

of the planets to tweak
out feeble horoscope.
I am born now. This gash
in the world

through which I come,
this gush of feeling
(but nothing feels)
is amniotic fluid,

this headache is me
squeezed into the world
again. Someone
waiting to be me.

1 December 2005

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I dream a new postage stamp:

ball a-rolling

down inclined plane.

Discovery of Physics

in Antiquity.

37¢ Numbers

only predict,

numbers never remember.

The ball rolls off the table

and keeps going across the floor.

The floor is infinite,

will the ball ever stop?

I'm getting nervous, almost frightened,

but Archimedes is asleep.

1 December 2005

= = = = =

How the wild scraggly boxwood lifts
away from sunrise always as
a ghost woman flees into dusk
where all my life I always find her.

Repeat. The day does. Always
something new from Africa but
Afrika is far. Aphrica is war.
Nothing stays the same but nothing changes.

Have I finished yet? The boxwood
runs shrieking past me, not in fear
but in desire do we turn the earth
so fast to meet our faces – there

there into which she hurries hides
a monstrous lover worse than me
his flesh made of shadow and his mind
made of meat, he drives

a big old crate his father lets him take
and prowl from state to state until he finds
the vineyard where the grapes are pressed
that made the wine this tree this house

and light and air consume, the original
psychagogic juice, the fierce true chemical
nameless in number theory, absent
from the alchemist's retort that spills

wind round the galloping old tree.

2 December 2005

= = = = =

In my front door
there is a back door
to my house
To kiss me is to leave me

I will be there at the frontier
where no one will cross
will stand in new snow
up to my ankles.

This is the famous place
where the road goes.

2 December 2005

= = = = =

I propose to perform some experiments
on the continent you brought back
concealed – not too well – in your body.
I saw the rivers of it in your nervous smile—
piranhas, Pisces, problems – the orderly
unfolding of desire shaped of a haunch.
Making a tree out of me. With a monkey in it.
It hurts to love, and you love what hurts,
remorseless opera, tenor shrilling at your hide,
the soprano sobbing at the way the jungle
leaves mildew on her satin gown. The seats
filled with businessmen like me,
scientists of the impossible. After the surgery
painless and invisible, I will bring you
gently to recuperate with me in my
tower lately erected on the far side of the moon.

2 December 2005

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To have lost you to the sky –
that's hard.

The long habit of losing
notwithstanding,
continuity is all.
Even the continuity of farewell.

3 December 2005

CREDO IN MUSAM

Then choose the word,
the rest is sanity.

The first word though
chooses you.

3 December 2005

A MAP OF HIS PRISON

shows a narrow circle
inside which a curving square
nestles inside a point.

Down there is him—
a sort of hum he hears
all his life long if he listens.
Him hum.

Squeezed inside the point
he breaks things there,
tips his hat to nuns in the street,
he wears no hat, there are no nuns.
It is said. It is not tropical,
not a provincial capital on a broad river,
nothing much green.

Something touches him on the knee.
It might be the one. Or the other one.
His hands hide in his hair
or hide themselves against his face
by hiding his eyes.
Now none can see.

Just the him hum
softly, soft as a worn under a hedge.

Him hum,
and it is not the one, not even the other one,
that touches him, touches his knee.

Him hum,
motherless coins sleep in his hands –
no commerce, no connection, no creed.

Yet he is a kind of church or two
(open the doors and hear him hum)

- 1) a river with sharks
- 2) an opera house built of water
- 3) a folding oilcloth card table
- 4) a vase made of feathers –
 there was a time when Hawaiian birds
 lived in his rocks,

not the jungle. Not a god. A friend
to help the hum. Friend
to who he could say: My hand hurt
being alone. Hold my hand.
See if that helps.

3 December 2005

EVERY STREET LIGHT VOTIVE LAMP

Can I make that light go out
just by being?

It is such a long night, this art,

this Paraguay of lost souls,
the seeming all round us,
the sandaled heart,

the missionary hand.

I still want you.

2.

There is a nerve
runs through the night—
this understands.

The narcolept
always ready to be gone.

In that kingdsom
a thought
has the weight and size
of a turnip, *a blue*
light signifies a house

and you go down there
licking your way along the stars
my beautiful white Egyptian heathen

3.

I wake and the night is perfectly still—
no dog no car no weather.
Nothing moves. But the feel of things
is different. It is like a language the skin reads.
The middle of the night sounds youish.

3 December 2005

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I am wise with my hand,
tired. I am sugar with my memory.
Forget.

3 XII 05

KENOSIS

After all that nothing
left us full – there were lambs
in moonlight – what more?

There was a radio so tuned
it brought in only earlier years,
transmissions from the past.

Here is a coin for you, yellow Euro
with a harp on the hasp of it.
So many things I still have to tell you

a half-opened rose.
Chinese landscape, vigorous old men
clambering up cliffs wet with spray

torrents of whitewater far below them
in the mysterious ravine. It is sad,
like no longer remembering a tree.

But there is a flower seller by the canal,
a song she's humming, *O toi, mon âme*

I think it is, and with this coin too
made only out of breath
I'll pay my fare forever.

3 December 2005