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## decl2005

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## OCEANS

There are anxieties  
shaped in every letter  
there are great whales  
chasing us in the smallest seas  
ocean of what I mean  
(or broken land, nightmare  
avenue, slithery at our feet)

think of the whole sea as an island  
inconstant, think of it  
as movement to which  
the steady heart assents—  
and that assent is continent

think of living there,  
endless island, *Akarana*,  
boundless time and only dark  
now and then to limit the domain—  
you rule it all and dare not take  
a single step.

Everything  
belongs to the senses, you say,  
quoting some Barabbas of the schools,  
but the senses belong to everything,  
they are the world's double agents  
set to do their mole-work in your flesh,  
making you care about the Other,  
all the shimmering faces of the other  
until you become the shadow of what is there,  
dependent. Where you could be alone  
the whole sea yourself.

27 December 2005

## MEDULLA

There is a bitter taste today  
a dream, someone cut  
while I cried out,

someone cut the spine cord of another  
thus ending life – a life  
we have no right to stop – cut

with one half-reluctant press  
a small blade through the marrow.  
Some life ended and I witnessed.

But all I saw was hand  
a knife, a bone  
and the quivering spinal cord itself

tender harmless alone in all the world.

27 December 2005

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Could we send the nervous system  
to walk around the world without a body  
just the tree of its stem and branches  
pure awareness traveling the earth?

27 XII 05

## CHRISTMAS

The religion they took away from me.

The god they said no longer mattered.

Embrace the Christ Child and forget the Man God.

Ignore everything Jesus said and contemplate instead the blank slate of a pretty child sleeping snug in a Family Values pantomime.

The infant (=un-speaking) Jesus replaces the hard talk of the grown man.

Current religion worships in the manger the new-born consumer, to whom the subject peoples of the earth bring gifts. That is not what Christmas means, but is how the terrible secular atheism called Public Christianity uses this strange and terrifying festival, birthday of a dying man.

27 December 2005

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Something breaking is a law  
a thornbush full of documents  
ill-lit by moonlight  
and you must read them all

because that is what you are  
a tanner of human hide  
a milkmaid of dragons  
and you beseech the river

and you defile the moon  
with your explanations, you  
shred the darkness itself  
with endless commentary

why did I take you to myself  
why did I burrow in your lap  
as if you of all disasters  
knew the one thing I had to learn?

27 December 2005

## INCARNATION

I haven't gotten here yet.  
I thought I had but I have not.

The tree is here and the little stream  
I always meant and always wanted

and the sun straight over the mountain  
and more trees than I can name

and a valley deep in snow.  
But no me yet.

All these years I've been hurrying  
to this appointed place

I see it sometimes so clearly, this house my house,  
my window, the locust tree

with a crow in it,  
all complete except for me.

27 December 2005

## NIGHT EYES

Can it stand there and look in my face  
like the deer last night beside the dirt road  
coming out of Rokeby, just stand  
in the brush and have bright eyes  
and regard me signifying nothing?  
Or what is this nothing it was  
or would have been signifying,  
can I have it too, can I be  
what an animal can mean, looking  
vigilant, his whole life in his eyes  
on a cold night standing in trees?  
There must be something there –  
it is the old I-am-here razzmatazz,  
the sexy saxophone warble  
of sheer ontology, or here-I-am,  
the trumpet cry of brassy certainty,  
something, anything, any sound  
in a winter night to help me mend  
the absence at the core of my mind

28 December 2005



## EPOPTeia

Given: One choosing,  
one chosen. A bird  
of one sort or another,  
nothing too written down,  
more a shadow quick on snow,  
you don't know 'bird' but it's gone  
before you look up and name it,

gone before identity.  
Call this shadow the choosing,  
you are the chosen then,  
the witness of this ἔποπτεία,  
the formal revelation of  
the visible component of the Mystery.

Some snow. Some dark  
flits across it, reminding 'bird.'  
Then it was night. The conspirators  
mumbled by the dying fire,  
deliberately kept low to hold down  
the telltale flames.

We have seen  
one said. And another asked  
But what have we seen?  
We have seen a shadow  
moving on the snow,  
From this we must infer the world  
as it is: things, movement, winter, light.

We know what we must change.  
What must be changed?  
Silence. The way we see or the way things are?  
Silence. Is there a difference? Silence.  
The bird is trying to tell us something:  
*I don't know my own name either but you are salt.*

28 December 2005

## ORLOG

Binside and boutside  
my fate my *ur-law*  
a fate is what is *fatum*,  
what is spoken, a destiny  
is law, a law is broken  
except the first one,  
the prime one, ur-law,  
what is written,  
the law is written  
and I am the paper  
or the birch bark  
in which those runes are set  
you can read them  
better than I can,  
my inside is my outside  
and you can tell

. . . 28 December 2005

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All those lemon slices on all those rec room bars  
lemon in one saucer lime in the other  
how much we need to be various—

I own you, by your ears I lead you  
gold-chainletted down through the *turba*,  
this gallimaufry congeries of creeps, a party,

your friends and mine. I close my eyes  
and think about lemon slices. Rock salt.  
Candle flames. There, I feel better already:

there's nothing like a thing to soothe the mind.  
A thing is so much itself, so competently  
in the core of its identity, touch a thing

and be healed. Pigeons overhead?  
Don't give me that, I don't want ornithology,  
I want the actual, the blue-eyed murder victim,

Iraqi suicide, the broken drawbridge,  
the burning tractor trailer. No pigeons.  
Texas on fire and the woodcocks flee.

29 December 2005

## ***TURBA***

is the crowd  
of all the wise alchemists  
assembled, gazing  
lethfully at one another's  
famuluses and famulae,  
the cute assistants –

the *gleam* of mercury, the *silk*  
of sulfur's touch –  
now believe me,

I am a radical of matter  
I believe everything that I can touch,  
everything that makes me feel.

Maybe something is enough –  
but not for me.

29 December 2005

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I understood some of it,  
the part with the cucumber and the trout,  
mist over the little pond and rain,  
I always understand rain.

But there was a religion to it  
new to me, something about a child  
and a crossword puzzle, a dog,  
a trombone. How can they hold,

live together a mere afternoon  
even in winter? Boys  
miss their father forever  
whether he is there with them or not—

biography is only a detail,  
the absence is permanent, part  
of being a boy, inescapable:

*He is gone  
from the beginning  
and only I am left alone*

I see this in his eyes when he looks up from his book.

29 December 2005  
*for Esther Allen*

## THE TRUTH BEHIND SANTA CLAUS

We start out in Smyrna or Izmir  
a city full of Byzantines, Armenian  
poets, Circassian dancing girls,  
Greek alchemists. The sea not far.

We see him standing, a fat bishop  
as it seems, over a fat barrel  
from which three naked boys  
are beginning to stand up—

they had been slaughtered, chopped  
in pieces, pickled in the barrel  
and meant for food. Saint Nicholas  
(for that is who the bishop is)

has not only brought them back to life  
but made them whole, each collop  
neatly back in its original boy  
and all the boys unpickled, sweet

pre-adolescent flesh, epebes anew.  
“The Desalination of the Virgins”  
some called this miracle, others  
“He is good to children, very.”

The reputation lingered. But slowly  
he turned port wine red and jolly—  
we picture that Anatolian bishop  
morose as any prelate (they get points

for frowning at the laity) suddenly  
blossoming into smile. We ask:  
where have we seen another picture  
much like this, a naked human

reconstituted from a cauldron,  
the old king made young again?  
Aha! The old alchemical burlesque,  
the lugubrious history of the elements

rescued from chemistry into Spirit  
Land and some merry old party  
giggling with Faustian delight  
that life and light have come again.

Santa Claus is all we have left  
of the Alchemist. But how (and why!)  
does he migrate to the North Pole,  
surround himself with dwarves

and compact deer, why toys,  
chimneys, Christmas Eve?  
As Philo Vance would say, Perpend.  
Here comes the explanation.

Thule. The magic mystical order  
of the Sun Behind the Sun  
the Tropical Civility (two words  
that seldom go together) hidden

in the Arctic, the North  
beyond mere north, the Polar  
Crown, the light that loves us  
and speaks old German,

the runes that Jack Frost scrapes  
along your windowpane  
this very day, a message from Thule,  
the autograph of Santa Claus.

The secret of alchemy is the northern light.  
It comes through every window  
but up there it's purest. The little men  
(homunculi) the alchemist creates

(they are not dwarves at all,  
they're just smart and small,  
like the puzzling Cabeiroi  
of old Samothrace or the Three

Gods Wearing Hoods in Yorkshire),  
compact people, compact reindeer,  
hidden in the glory of aurora,  
busy in their workshop making



what? What do they make  
so far away from raw materials?  
Why there? It's light they build with  
and the mind they make

into the dreams that stream  
down along earth's magnetic field  
(the Reindeer Path) and come  
every night (not just Xmas)

down into your dreamless body  
and fill it with their information  
from which you wake astonished  
and run to share it with

all the other lucid human children.

30 December 2005

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Jazz a slug a blue sun  
kind of fat-hipped day  
it could be Ornette,  
milagro, I meant you so  
well once and here we are  
child after child getting born  
and so what, so what  
we need and should  
devote our lovely selves to  
is figure out a proper way  
to propagate our mind  
across the spaces of time  
without treating women  
like machinery, no more  
children! cloned  
instead magnificences!  
Athena full grown!  
Mind born from mind  
responding to our own  
willful Intelligent Design.

30 December 2005  
Poughkeepsie Starbucks

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Sometimes all you need's some baking  
soda some flour and some sugar  
to dream your way to heaven

and a little milk from that eternal lake  
till we are of those who  
once upon a time were ordinary smokers.

30 December 2005  
Poughkeepsie

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*Le soleil est mort.  
Seule dans la nuit obscure,  
j'écoute la voix confuse des étoiles.  
Mon âme m'abandonne.*  
--Roussel's **Padmâvatî**, her funeral aria.

I hear the confused voice of the stars  
and then I think it's one, one voice  
all these points of light rehearsing

to tell me something, and my hearing  
of this telling is what I call confused.  
The stars say nothing. Or one thing clear.

30 December 2005

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The world understands waiting.

What is not understood is a Chariot  
that goes and goes.

There comes reading in the Bible  
(Revelations; or the woman  
taken in adultery; or the lilies  
of the field – are they anemones  
like the ones from Battenfield's,  
are they roses the Magi brought  
from Persia) and some sort of flowers.  
But there is no sleep.

No real sleep.

Men are afraid to close their eyes.  
So close to the end of everything.

Is it hours? Is it anemones really,  
mane of the lion, turbaned tulips,  
what grows at this imaginary altitude?

For it is time to harvest the sea.  
A gong back there, yes, darling,  
the sea is a gong.

I love you because you never say so.

31 December 2005

## SOLOMON

But then Solomon came out of his tomb  
(only I know where he is buried) and said:

I am undead  
I am a name

every time you say my name  
my wisdom and my strength are with you

and my weakness comes too  
to rest like silk along your throat.

A man's nature can't be held down beneath a stone.  
Any name to can pronounce

will hurry to your aid—  
it will do to you or for you

whatever its man or woman could  
when they still bore it

strolling about the quick world  
vanishing as you will too

leaving some sort of name behind.

31 December 2005

## NEW YEARS EVE

At least listen. Something,  
something else. The Limmat  
flowing through chestnut trees  
into its lake. At least  
that's what I remember.

And what has remembering  
got to do with listening. Listen,  
I'm only telling you what comes to mind,  
one thing after another, isn't that  
enough for you? It's enough for me,  
a day with you and then another,  
another, always, this and that and this and that  
pouring from the future towards us,  
it's like Arabic, a fluent line  
from right to left and who knows what it means?

31 December 2005