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## BIRTHDAY AS PRESENT

*for Charlotte, ever & ever*

The things that come to us  
the gifts the presences  
are persuaders who won't let us  
levant from the room

the room is where we live  
and go on living, *Raum*  
the Germans say, Space  
all round but for us

inside, the things that live us  
even the nighthawk's cry  
Sunday midnight sounded  
so eerie is on the sun's side

the way cathedrals are,  
or Europe, or cats, or milk,  
we get called into being  
and sustained, fed, amused,

instructed, comforted,  
wed, things come  
into our lives to teach  
us how to be each other

and then that being so,  
intricate and slow, until  
we live with what we know  
and finally become it

till we too are real as birds  
even, or Roman aqueducts,  
or what I saw yesterday,  
one single last green leaf

left on the bare lilac  
I never saw a lilac leaf  
before, the passion  
of one thing after another

I think of this because  
it is your birthday and if you  
were not in the world  
what I know would not be

much use, so I cling to you  
because you know,  
now I'm trying to work out  
just what your information is

how to inhabit the moment  
as if it were the only one  
left of all the weird  
astrology called history

or time or wherever that  
bird flew to after its cry  
and left me to be there  
with you, where the leaf is now.

22 November 2010

= = = = =

I have paid my dues  
in the church of madness  
huddled in the last pew  
under the crimson window  
whose martyred saints—  
Sebastian, Andrew, Bartholomew—  
bled their light all over me  
until I choked on my own desires

I knelt down sometimes too  
and prayed for everything I wanted  
and prayed to be free of wanting  
and free of me, and all the books  
were dusty and all the words  
in them were dust, and dust  
was the music in my hymnal  
I sing still loud as I can  
cracked voiced lifted in an empty nave.

22 November 2010

## NOVEMBER SUNSET

Member motile stormcloud  
question. Silverforce a nomad sea  
good king know by what he gives away  
the cathedra he sate on  
his weary heavod  
held in his hard hands  
spoke he from throne—

Exalt the bowman  
sleeve in pleats  
abaft the mortal arrow  
fletched of flesh  
the targe make known,  
her eyes to his heart!

So the day died.  
In the country you see light  
over the houses and see  
sky right through their matching windows  
frail shells we habit in  
against the immense twilight.

22 November 2010

*L'énamourée*

All I hear is yesterday song  
a very specific fin-de-siècle number  
built round the crisis of a soaring interval  
like the heart suddenly hoping again—  
and such intervals as they say slay me.  
So even this nine a.m. sunlight yelling in the window  
can't mute that manic velvet hum.  
All this is not much to tell you  
but it's important to tell it right.

23 November 2010

## THE GATE

always open is never open  
basalt ashlar from the base  
columns in porphyry

ungrooved unfoliated tall  
the gate is a gap in a wall  
the gateway has no gate

a street runs right in  
like breath into a dying man  
can you die on an inbreath?

the gate knows nothing of its wall  
the wall thinks only of the sky  
it has to hold up all day long

the sky goes away at night  
when the stars hold the whole world up  
but the wall has to hold its breath

eternally, the gate  
is always open, the gate  
may be said to love you too



there is no gate  
who knows what goes on inside  
beyond the gate

is it a city or just open space  
for going and going  
and never coming back?

23 November 2010

=====

Adding day to day  
something matters.  
Alphabet of corn.  
A fence touches earth  
the wooden posts  
rot from the ground up  
the way its once  
tree grew. This  
is music, you know,  
not just any  
kind of sense.  
Time to go in.  
The woods belong  
to themselves,  
the deer already shiver  
it's not very cold.  
It starts from the bottom  
and grows. No  
one to hear it.

23 November 2010

**KNOWING**

*in memory of Michael Gizzi*

You don't know anybody  
till you don't know them anymore.  
When they are beyond all your questions,  
your nosy inferences, then  
their doors fly open, their pockets  
empty out all over the rug.  
Death is the one big secret  
that turns all the little secrets  
inside out. Now you know  
he was an agent of Atlantis,  
addicted to nutmeg,  
allergic to peonies, fond of kale.  
It's strange that all that stuff  
is still here but he's gone.  
The agent. Should he bother  
coming back to tell us all he knows  
of where he's been and where he is?  
We're not worth it,  
we'd only get confused  
by his granite intimations,  
the earthy rumble of his music,  
his weird new money.  
He presses coins into our palms,

alms, somehow they'll never  
fall out, never get spent.  
No, nobody comes back.  
You never really know anything  
unless you make it up yourself.  
We come towards you, Michael,  
keeping a delicate distance,  
the measure of our fear,  
your sanctity. The apart  
is its own language you spoke so well.

23 November 2010

26 November 2010, Boston

## MORGENGRÜN

as fore a hurricane  
a spill of yellow  
flame greens the blue sky and  
clouds know us in.

No us. I am alone with the sky.  
The sky is my memory.  
The clouds are women  
enough. The sunlight  
when it breaks through  
is the same as the habit of  
wanting people, wanting things.

*But memory wants nothing—*  
it is always surfeited,  
just enough space for today to cram in,  
later. No cloud today,  
just a sense of haze  
as if they're all looking in at me  
but from very far away.

24 November 2010

## NACHTISANKTGALLEN

In the woods it's easy to talk  
trees listen so well  
and tree roots importunate  
slow me down.

I hear those old librarians  
Swiss nightingales  
sighing, a thousand years  
of slipping slipper-footed over  
polished oaken monastery floors  
to find some modern book or other  
that lives up to its native wood.

Is there a text you can actually  
walk on, a word  
that carries you upstairs  
and puts you to bed?

24 November 2010

= = = = =

I thought I saw a dead bird  
crushed, ruffled up on the walk  
busted wings jittering in wind,  
you looked at me out of the deep  
cenotes of your eyes and thought  
out loud how weird I was to see  
crumpled black plastic as a bird  
alive or dead but dead was worse  
and how grim such seeing was.  
What could I do. I see all things  
as I see you, rich with resemblance,  
life rich with death, the dead things  
quivering with rebirth, turn by  
turn and fly away, I thought a bird.

24 November 2010

= = = = =

1.

Blue certainties

that's what we're looking for  
a little comma hanging in the air  
tells us here take a breath  
don't stop though  
breathe and move on  
the next town will have a better name.

2.

Wooden fence waffles for breakfast  
but chewing gum for lunch.  
Tumbleweed as seen in Pasadena  
a name that doesn't mean anything  
Santa Ana pouring down the canyons  
we've all been there hot day  
the sun a hermit in his cave  
shop signs slam against the wind  
just like the real world almost  
the place you never manage to reach  
and from which you can never depart.

25 November 2010

Thanksgiving



## IN QUOTATION

He sent me a book he wrote  
I read it with a mind  
half his half mine  
now I don't know who knew what.

25 November 2010

= = = = =

Glass in winter  
woolen rug  
cigarette burn  
long ago smolder  
when people  
Tibetan vases  
not glass not winter  
still people  
run on bare feet  
cold carpet treatment  
the wounded ballet  
broken dug-up ground  
all seeds spilled out  
amortized bouquet  
still in first snow  
few flakes roses last  
their own budget  
to stand clear  
before hamstring  
man time an urn  
a crow a column  
sky-high vase.  
Women. Vases.

26 November 2010, Boston

= = = = =

Hold by the militia three  
small villages and the bone  
above the left ear. Pigeons  
you'd call them flutter  
on the field of hair.  
Yellow fur at this season  
blonde weather. A mother  
holds another woman's child  
what do arms know  
of what they hold  
only the holding knows.

27 November 2010, Boston

= = = = =

A little flame as  
on a pocket candle  
was always with me  
then it was dawn

not yet on this black  
street far up one  
lamp where the hill hides

wars start and stop  
all by themselves we  
are just students of their

weather nobody wants  
five thousand years a  
woodpecker surgeons a tree.

27 November 2010, Boston