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Sleep more
need less.

You're alive in there,
that is your life too,

effortless, true.

3 January 2010

(Riff for First Light)

We ask a seldom for a spurt
it answers engine actively
utter my pistons! the blackguard cries
elephants on common roads, barnacles
on my eyes I cannot see, or what I see
doubts me to behold, who am I
fooling, that's just language in my mouth,
like Stortebek taking his famous
eleven footsteps after his head's chopped off
before he fell—I'm only on my third
step now and talking a mile a minute
they used to say back when that was fast,
not even touching. I run on hydrogen,
oxygen, and more nitrogen than you
senselessly reckon—how little we know!
And why! Watch out, this is only
the beginning, cards fall from my cuffs
each one your fate, each fate a fantasy.
For nothing happens. You will go on
reading this page forever, distraction
will protect you from its meaning,
you'll remember pack ice off Oswego
that girl with an agouti, the woodpecker
hitting on your wall. Forget all that ,
this is actually happening right now.

3 January 2010

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The bird tears itself off the branch
the wind begs it
the sky offends me
with this bright savage cold
transactions all round me
I don't understand
though I am a native of winter
and speak its rusted dialect.
When you hear me you think
that summer never was or will.

3 January 2010

THE PAST

The past hasn't even happened yet

Lincoln is still bleeding to death in a dingy hospital

while ignorant doctors gaze at his wound

Booth is still a fugitive

dragging his broken leg after him through the world

Manitoba Yellowknife Alaska

dazed with cold he hardly notices the pain any more

the pain is his life

pain keeps you alive

no one has died yet

the past is not done yet,

the blood of the emperor-president

sifts through his brain

his vision grows wider

all the world is one great Union now

only the birds of the air

are free of that immense allegiance

he must do something about the birds

the birds are always present

when you see a bird flying overhead

you know there is no past, no past at all,

everything is still happening,
everyone is seed, everyone food for everyone else,

in their wooden cabins
the Russians see him coming
a sobbing man hobbling along
surely this man is a sign
what is he a sign of
he is coming to take over the wilderness
a living pain is more powerful than a king
a dying president himself a kind of bird

April and no lilacs in Alaska
and it isn't May yet
not even today
once it snows it snows forever
the snow is all we know
even now, not even yet
is the old thing done with its doing,
nothing has happened,
Booth groans, Lincoln groans,
the doctors send out for leeches and more tea

down south they know all this means nothing
the war will never end
the war is a natural condition
like seasons like cottonmouths in the swamp

like sweat running down your own skin as if
your skin were somebody else's and it's hot
o Christ it's hot in a war
the soldiers freezing on the field can't even die,

nothing can change, the past is forever,
the past is waiting for us tomorrow
and nothing ever happened ever.

3 January 2010

2010

Looking at the numbers
I wonder if I'll ever
understand anything again

how can this many years
have coiled around me
so many caresses so many names

and I'm still me, that last
impersonation, a tune
I can't get out of my head

but still can't sing out loud.

3 January 2010

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Profit from the alphabet—

children are running in and out of the letters
some of them not so young

there is room for everyone
or almost room

sometimes I am caught
between one letter and another
in a rock cleft, letters don't move,
rock cleft trap,
have to pronounce myself out of it
but still for hours after
shiver still with that claustro feeling
squeezed between unyielding signs
each of which has a special name

2.

It is a circumcision of the mouth
to learn to speak

then the other people come
and need to be talked to,
that noisy obedience,

don't make me talk
don't make me touch you
with what I mean
your clean and distant mountain skin.

4 January 2010

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I don't have to wait
for it to happen
I could call them too
little boat I am
on your big sea
save me, answer
your phone lift me
out of your pocket
and listen to me
by then I might
have something to say.

4 January 2010

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Who is this I who keeps intruding
on the peaceful unison of language?
Is he not a child on stilts,
a wounded veteran carrying signboards
a nun kneeling in the gutter?
Why don't we teach him silence?
Because we are no better than I—
an imaginary manyness of me.
At least she's on her own knees, isn't he?

4 January 2010

= = = = =

Almost time for time.

Till then the words

the snow the sun

rising.

4.I.10

CIRCUMSTANCE

Things standing around
waiting to be this.

But this little thing
is center of everyone.

It's like a freeborn pirate,
a king in disguise,
an eagle over your head,
the eyes of a fly

you find it everywhere
but here it talks
a language you'll never know
though you read it all day long.

4 January 2010

Am I not a Man & a Brother?

The black man speaks it,
Blake says it,
and he is.

But I don't know—
he is certainly a man
and certainly my brother.

But I am no man,
non homo sum sed vermis
said David, posing for Michelangelo,

I am not what you think I am
I have a wife but am no husband
I am not whatever you say I am.

4 January 2010

SONNAMBULA

Why don't I listen to this every day
Callas singing that last great slow cavatina
might teach me what human feeling means.

4.I.10

THERE IS A WINDOW

1.

There is a window. It wants it.

Roll a world up outside and it consumes it,
reveals it. A window shows clearest
what it devours. A window is all about it,
is a big it itself, all show and no tell,
a house is just a part of a window where you can sleep.

2.

In ancient times they built the window first
fitting it to the land around it or the sea.
Studied it for months or even years
then slowly, cautiously, framed in
a house behind it. It was the window's house
but let men and women live in it
as long as they were reverent to the window
and the long long story it keeps telling them—
delicate changes, a bird here, a branch fell there,
a merchant comes by with news from Ispahan.

3.

Nowadays a window is a lonesome thing
for all its manyness, they put them
all over a house and the houses get bigger,
a thousand apartments in the Dubai Burj
twenty-six thousand windows—
and how hard a window has to work now,
each one has to make up a different story
or summon out of nowhere a seeming world
that may or may not be there when
the baffled weary dwellers try to step outside.

4 January 2010

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Sing or burst.

Or song is burst

a lonely knowing

blown to bits

in public places

contusions of

feelings no one felt.

4 January 2010

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Can it be? Can it not be?

That we have to ask

means we less surely are.

4.I.10

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The unknown celebrity

the face you don't know
you see it everywhere
you hear words float in the air
whenever that face is near
you ask your friends
Who is that? and they don't know
or you don't have any friends
and the mirrors are all broken.

5 January 2010