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We used to believe
in each other
and all the energies
that run belief
and run with it
but now the nothing
has set in
the decade ending
the calendar in trouble
blue people pressing
through the trees
troubled with some
pain we don't understand.

Self-analysis

leads to no self.

Lost in untangency
the blue folk confuse us
with themselves,
want to join us,
want to party.

They console us
by examining loss,
the bring their fingertips
an inch from our foreheads
and we can feel the cold

of their kindness
radiate towards us.

Belief is dark.

It counts for sex
among them, child-free,
safe. Their eyes
look like Sabbath
candles in an empty house.

1 March 2009

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Capitalist music fades.
Overfed, anxious,
it's always Sunday night
with dread the next day.
Why are we slaves?

1.III.09

= = = = =

It wasn't the apple,
 wasn't the tree,
wasn't even eating it—
 it was eating it raw.

The lazy reach out
the harsh sweet fruit.

Work for a living, angel—
we were exiled for laziness.

1 March 2009

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There was no Moses.

Hardly any Abraham.

Only Melchizedek alone,
his eyes full of tears
because no one wants to be happy.

Are they amber, are they green?

The man himself is striding
still with us, guiding even
in the desert of our ordinary lives.

1 March 2009

FLOWERS

Why not one of those
and one of those?
Flowers are teachers—
color, quiet, time,
amazement, unlastingness.
Taken indoors: soft
wild beasts in the house.
Animals of light.

1 March 2009

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(A flower in the dark is not even tomorrow.)

1.III.09

VESPERTILIO,

a bat.

The night shapes itself
and flies small
around your eaves,
householder,
holder of bats.

In spring birds come north
the bats come out to meet them
day and night dividing the sky.

I know you're there
I can't see you

Parallax problem,
my eye on the wrong side of light.

1 March 2009

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Don't think I'm just physiology.
There's an ampersand after my name.
In Costa Rica they speak English and have bats—
I learned my lessons from the clock,
cock, rock, the hole in my sock
explained *Mutabilitie*, a poem
by an enemy of Ireland who still
married my old friend Eliza Boyle.
I'm trying hard to tell the truth
but there is none. Absent such,
I make it up, for you, and you,
all my radiant Elizabeths.
I'm scared of narrow spaces,
staircases make me dizzy.
But enough about you. This grandeur
has a sonnet in it somewhere,
does anybody have a decent knife?

1 March 2009

I ADMIT IT

We work our way into things
and let each other watch.
It's always interesting, this art stuff,
watching a size 6 get into a size 2
and there are words all over at the end
or pictures, noises, arrays
of interesting objects in local space.
Keep it up and we'll have a planet
of our own some day, every girl
gets her own one-man-show,
happy as hungry squirrels on the snow.

1 March 2009

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Easy rapture? A reed
in the reeds
of the pond and a black
bird sitting on it.

Only one. Swaying
harbinger. Tonight
a foot of snow foretold.
Who will open the door?

Who will play the ingénue
role, the springtime?
Will it be that girl
with a soft spot for me

at the base of her spine?
Will it be Australia
all over again?
In Carlo Crivelli's great

painting a richly flowered
Persian carpet hands
over the slim railing of
a courtesan's balcony—

here be intricate pleasures,
colors, enfoldings, symbolisms
clinging like syphilis,
inescapable excitements,

consequences, beauty.

Read my flag she says.

The wind is not even blowing,
the colors do all the work

themselves. Who belongs

to winter now? I do

says the quivering reed.

But the woman is the one who smiles.

1 March 2009

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Somehow things become what they are again
even though I didn't get that much sleep.

Please understand (whoever you are)

that 'I' is a purely grammatical vector

in this procedure. No actual person

is exposed in his haecceity— doesn't

Derrida use that mediaeval word?—

it's just this busy little letter of the

alphabet huffing and puffing and shoving

verbs around. Got to make them go.

But why do verbs need subjects anyhow?

It all is always moving, why don't we speak

in a language made exclusively of nouns?

1 March 2009

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Systems people like to eat—
a miracle all by itself
when you think of it, that
technologists consent to use
that one all-purpose mushy orifice
the holy Human Mouth. From it
these words come to assail the clean
geometry of their Methodist ears.

1 March 2009

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Write meant scratch
or carve
the words in

what? bark, bast,
stone, plank
of old wood

who taught you?
how did you dare
to remember?

at night you
scratched the word
morning on slate

and set it flat
by the dying fire
and it came.

1 March 2009

= = = = =

Advocates in fussy collars
through the marble corridors.
The house of law has slippery floors—
tread gently, barristers,
your mouths busy with a hundred precedents
for this morning's trickery.
I see this all the time on French TV,
makes me proud to be an American,
we don't bother dressing up to tell our lies.

1 March 2009

RED CITY

I was flying low over the southeastern corner of Arabia, the region called on maps by a name that when I was a child always sounded to me like my own name: Ruba' al-Khali. It means the empty quarter, and here it was at last, beneath me.

Red, astonishing crimson rock and ravines as far as I could see. It was dawn all over the sky but that red rock below me was bright as noon, hot as noon. I feasted my eyes on the pain of looking at it. What was it? It has been here longer than anything on the planet, this scarred red earth. Nothing could ever live there. But the carving, scouring must have been ancient watercourse, wadi, eroding the earth. Writing originally means to scratch or gouge. This land was written on forever, gouged into an unreadable text.

The empty quarter was an empty page. The empty page was full of writing. It was an agony to look down on it, the fierce brightness, the words I couldn't read, the words I have to read. Have to.

As long as the plane took to pass, how slow it was, as if drifting through that long quiet engine roar I'd been hearing hour after hour until it wound up feeling like silence, that rough quiet all round, the plane falling slack across the land, unobtrusively losing altitude for its landing on the shores of the Gulf still far ahead to the north.

Not a shadow moved on its own down there. Sometimes the shadow of the plane intruded on that red silence, mostly not. The heat baked up at us, I could feel it even in the pressurized cabin. What was this place.

It has been here since the beginning. Maybe it was the beginning, or still is, and from it one day the rest of the beginning will come out.

The end of the beginning may be beginning.

All I could remember was Christian Rosenkreutz, the fabled and perhaps wholly imaginal explorer who in this very wilderness had discovered in the fourteenth century a most ancient city, from which all the wisdom of the planet had come, was still to come. He had been in these parched places, had come barefoot over the burning rock and learned enough to keep us guessing for six hundred years, the wisdom named, perhaps for him from his own name, the mysteries of the Rose Cross, the Rosicrucian.

But the city was called by a different name: *Damcar*, he called it in his Latin script, and said it meant City of the Blood of the Lamb. And if it's Hebrew as it sounds, *dam kar* are certainly blood and lamb. We must know who that Lamb is, and how His blood was shed, and how we are supposed to drink of the blood. And what happens to us when we do.

Now, years later, long after Arabia, I hear about the city of Damanhur, to which love of going, love of arriving, love of being illuminated by bewilderment itself has brought a soul or too I know. Now I wonder if its name is not from some archaic Semitic stratum before Hebrew and Arabic

diverged, if its name is really Dam an-Nur, Blood of the Light. As you know, if you look at the sun even a few seconds, you carry its red glow in your eyes for minutes after, an ardent ruby only you can see. And when later, in some jewelry store or on some friend's hand, you see an actual ruby, you see inside it, very far down inside, a tiny point of golden light, the meek reciprocal of the orb that lords it over the sky. And as you know, the ruby has always been called the Blood of the Sun.

So what is this city. Is it the Red City I looked down on and could not see, though every quivering instinct in my body screamed out that it was there, and I knew it, and even though I saw nothing but the oven-tortured rock I could feel the wisdom piercing up at me, don't you understand, heat is wisdom, fire is the wisest man, not common fire, no, but *Sapientium Ignis*, fire of the wise. That heat I thought was mere common desert and Persian Gulf swelter, that heat was talking, was the rock reading itself out loud to me.

And I am still listening. I feel it in the heat in me. Whenever I am puzzled or in doubt, I look into my body, I ask and answer down in there. Up in here. The body is on all sides of the mind, mind can get there anywhere. So I became a loosened rock, a part of that red city. And of course that is what a city is:

a city is what goes with you wherever you go.

When I think of the city, I taste faintly in my mouth the blood of the lamb. Do you understand what I mean? When you touch another person, hold

their body firm, just touch the soft of their arm, what you feel is the *instruction of the city*, and that is how music is possible, a mouth on a reed, a finger on a string, a fist on a steel drum.

We who have seen the city have had the city seep into our eyes, tabernacle in us, lay out its streets and plazas and leafy boulevards inside us. From which we speak, what else can we do, the silence would kill us, and silence would kill all those we love, the simple neighbors even.

We who have seen the city have become the city, and there is no getting away from us.

1 March 2009