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## DAWN

The people who knew my night  
by hand, mine, blue dome  
in Samarkand, one more as if  
to live through to the end.  
As if an elephant were walking  
down my breath, Indian,  
caparisoned as such beasts are  
when deployed to make a rajah glad  
who had been moping in alabaster  
pavilions about some pet in politics.

Still I can breathe. Still the weather  
renews its growingly implausible  
conversation with us imaginers,  
the ones who fancy we are the same  
day after day. Weather is a mirror,  
darling, that's why it features  
prominently in all my dispatches,  
I mount it on the wall of my discourse  
so you can see yourself in it, bright,  
rather beautiful, and in the shadows  
me behind you, touching, in fact,  
just like the dream. Or like this light  
butting into the trees to say it's time  
for one more day. Time to change.

25 February 2007

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What is strength? Image inside image.  
Like that Lucy McKenzie painting  
of a woman eating her calm dinner  
under a painting behind her that  
shows what she is thinking, not  
calmly, obscenely, startling, in Dutch.

25 February 2007

= = = = =

How much measuring  
before the wood is ready?  
Already it fits almost  
perfectly inside the tree.

But nothing is ever 100%.  
That's why we represent it  
an infinity symbol struck  
by lightning, %, the loops  
of us springing apart  
presumably forever in  
the immeasurable forest  
so we spend the rest  
of our lives trying to  
match the wood grains together.

25 February 2007

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Prairie companion: a wolf.  
Into the base of the elm tree  
healing antibiotic cones  
have been jammed.  
Against the blight.  
Or a moon over grassland  
promising something.  
These things that come  
to mind, are just the mind.

25 February 2007

## THE MARTYRDOM OF SAINT PETER

Fortunate disagreement with the authorities  
takes Peter out of bed. Nothing is calm  
once you start to doubt the ordinary,

once you listen to a man who somehow  
seemed more than a man. Once you travel  
from place to place telling about it

sharing your bright confusion with the world  
city by city. Of course they're going to notice,  
to get even, even, when they get around to

crucifying you some summer day they'll  
do you upside down to let you know they've gotten  
some part of what you were trying to explain.

25 February 2007

## THE STRANGE COMPANIONS

And who were these  
arrayed like washerwomen  
at the weir, where water  
ran quickest, spared them  
some labor at the rinse?

They were our fathers,  
Masons to a man, content  
with leaving us hints here and  
(more often) there to tell  
how when we are thoughtful

we might find. But what it is  
we're looking for in fact  
the current long ago flushed away.

25 February 2007

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But these are surface excitements

like a slap or a kiss. A book  
is deeper than all that, though it still  
helps to have fingers to read it.

Leafing pages. As if you were the wind.  
And the wind could understand  
everything it touches. Everything it smoothes.

Do you read me? We lie  
so often, but we lie before each other  
also, spread open, asprawl like words.

25 February 2007

=====

It is good to be halfway somewhere,  
even home. A cold bright morning  
I've supervised all the way from dawn.  
Till now. When you see this message  
in your hand, and wondered how I dared to care.

25 February 2007

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When they see  
they see.  
But what.

What do they do.  
What they see  
to do is what they see

then what they do.  
Who are they who,  
who?

—25 February 2007

## OLIM COLUERAM

or song  
the lost things  
sing

\*

if it were lake, light.

It doesn't tell me.  
It is a spirit, bound  
to intersect our passages.

*Paysages*: landscapes.  
A landscape  
is a burden, a thing you have finally to do.

*Holzwege*, errant  
pathways through the wood.

\*

A flute is the easiest  
way to forget, shepherd.

Long glide of a tone  
down. Evening coming.

\*

Ware wolves.  
Every octave ends in one.  
Open maw.  
Everything you ever knew  
swallows.

\*

Now a Wednesday is a middle day  
even now on Sunday.  
Every day has Wednesday in the middle,  
middle of itself. Mercredi,  
lean and nimble, rules over it,  
our littlest world.

\*

Sleep embed in word  
word embed in silence

the mind must be flexible  
be liable. The mind is liable.

\*

Untie the sky  
& let it down  
string by string till  
all that light  
wreathes your head

even the smallest piece  
competes infinity

\*

Sometimes the word hides.  
The trouble with music  
Skryabin made much of it:

a single tone is a fixed smile.  
A tone is a mask.  
A key pressed on the keyboard  
is terrible. Frightening.

The thought of it  
almost worse than the sound.

\*

The sadness of the piano:

one hand dances  
one hand just remembers.

\*

O my father the roll  
one time of your piano  
the brown monkscloth  
of your Irish jokes  
the candleflame of your cigar,  
the windows lit up by your green eyes!

\*

Teaching water to skip stones.  
A pine tree with no snow flakes in it.  
A tree without snow.

\*

What do we care about stars?  
They are plows, just like the old days.  
Or sows, even older. It blazes  
in autumn, sneezes in winter,  
sneezes in springtime. Swings.  
And summer is a long, long river  
that no one ever swims in, ever.

\*

Hum in your hand.  
Pluck a white dove  
out of empty sky.

\*

The tattoo washes off in the rain.  
The face goes next,  
Finally a bone is all alone.  
Wet ivory but it knows  
how to talk. Mostly  
what it says is Goodbye.

\*

The pedestrian runs out of road.  
Soon the ground is a thing of the past.

Sight unseen he prays to the moon  
the way we do, *faute de mieux*.

Dubious sky. A dog nearby  
probably peaceful. The pedestrian

has a letter in the deepest pocket  
read once too many times already.

\*

Holding close  
what has no together

a chain of flowers,  
exhausted lovers fast asleep.

25 February 2007  
*(during Da Capo concert at Olin)*

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**Being the way** through  
something is a course  
you run but I stand  
still, my shadow is  
the hound at your heels

no more the simple  
departures as to be  
one another's animal  
calling as it might be  
at night to its kind

where none are left  
of that sort, ears  
pelt teeth tail  
only the scabbard  
left of the sword

it tries to cry in me  
as if good-bye  
the dumb sincerity  
of pain the insidious  
lie of being healed.

26 February 2007

## **OBJECTIVE EVIDENCE**

It's always better when you don't know  
and let it find you, let it let you know  
the weight the tendency of what you feel  
but never name it, it's better to walk  
in the shade of what it says, and catch  
your identity in momentary glimpses  
of the shadow that you cast, what you  
must be like if words like these  
appear in the record, who could you be  
if this is what it found you thinking?

26 February 2007

## **APRES**

And after the ceremonies of intimate acquaintance  
one beast can lie beside the other and permit  
the long knowledge that is time to ripen round them  
in them as they sleep. That is all they need.  
This is what they meant by being on earth at  
the same time as it is said, to share that time  
its spurts and leaks and droughts and gushes  
to endure each other's perfections as gifts  
from Being, greater than god and common as weather.

26 February 2007

## THE WEIGHT OF IT

Responsibility also is a habit  
the things we had  
cling to us still  
to be members of us

their wish is our command  
I live in the shadows  
of all I have done,  
a rubble man

infested with fame.  
Fama. What people say.  
We are killed by conversation.  
I wanted to run and hide

but there was no place  
I had not been.  
The snow that falls so gently now  
is last year's snow.

27 February 2007

= = = = =

**what we dare**  
to be clear

the about of lives  
around us in us

the snowplow  
of the nights

that leaves a scraped  
passageway

into the light  
inelegant actual

enough.

27 February 2007

## A WORD HEARD IN OPERA

what can it be to listen  
so close to the small thing  
the grain of marble  
that when we look close  
becomes crystals everything  
crystals the air itself  
glitters its molecules in us.  
Who is this us I keep at,  
who is this stone?

*gewöhnlich*, the usual  
is with us like spring weather,  
rain and morning  
and wet lilacs tossing in the wind

could that be every day?  
could now be now?

27 February 2007

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His potatoes  
will be something special  
nourished by  
the dead poet  
buried in this field.

*[as dreamt]*  
28 February 2007

## MY STOCKHOLM SPEECH

*[the first hundred words or so were dreamt, then I woke and kept on writing.]*

I have a confession. I believe in the Muse.

To do so is to be as unfashionable as those who believe in ghosts, or in God. As implausible as those who believe in the government.

Muse. When I first thought of talking about this today, I closed my eyes, or kept them closed rather, because I was sleeping, and indeed I am speaking to you from a dream, perhaps a very long dream, that holds us all.

At any rate, with closed eyes I opened the dictionary and read: **Muse**. *One of a number of angel-like entities, usually construed as feminine, who preside over various arts and skills, to each of which one Muse has been assigned, as, for instance, Erato, muse of lyric poetry. They are reputed to live atop some mountain, usually Parnassus q.v., or in some well-watered garden at its base. Nine muses are usually counted, their names being...* and so on. I looked up from my book, struck for the first time by these words, embodying as they did only what we have always told ourselves about these angels or divinities. Entities. I thought: *one of a number*. How extraordinary that the definition began with that. The muse is one. But the muse is many, because she (I will persist for a while in using the familiar female pronoun) is of a number. She does, doesn't. exist by herself, but only as a part or number or limb of her sisterhood. A single digit.

The group she belongs to owns or concerns itself not just with what we call arts. Besides Erato stands Clio, muse of history, looking about her. And on the grass lies Urania on her back, gazing into the sky, muse of astronomy, astrology, the measurements of earth and heaven, the mistress of Time. Of *le temps*, as the French say, which means both time and weather, the dance the sky does with the earth. I thought about their names, and understood (I hope with

a kind of reverent skepticism) that these names were what the Greeks or their local predecessors had called them. That is, these were the Muses' Greek names, not their own names, not perhaps the names of their essences. And maybe the familiar names do not even reveal the full range of arts and measures to which each glad lady had been assigned.

But, to be honest, as a confession made in a dream cannot help but be honest, I have thought for most of my life that the muse's true name was 'you.' Wife or friend or some such thing, a known presence with unknown parameters, we live with what we see but there is so much more. The smile on the face of a shadow. 'You.'

Then sometimes I think that 'you' are only a wound the muses make on me. Or that the muses are not other than the mystery of the Other, the mystery of the Other, all the things the other does to me. The other, the vast unknown country that projects its dark angle ever-outward beyond every person, every single one, from which strange place the quiet tilth or rivering energy keeps coming that nourishes artists and scientists into their more or less conscious acts. Deeds. The muses make us do.

I suppose I was being simple. Muses make us do, you make me do, ergo, you are muse. This specious syllogism sustained me over many a wild voyage on the craft that English quaintly calls the relationship. Sustained me though long friendship and swift hostilities, marriage and divorce, stress times and prairie afternoons of lucid calm.

Then I begin to understand. The voice of the other is *any* word I hear speaking. When words start speaking in the head, that is the Muse beginning her expression: squeezing it out of the stored experiences of the writer, out of the writer's ignorance too, out of the language the writer has the honor and

privilege to inhabit. It is the Muse beginning her dictation. Attend. I thought as I was writing this down, lo! she is saying even this.

I hope by the time I come to deliver this speech there will be still a king on the throne of Sweden, so he can tell me whether these matters are different for a king or queen from an ordinary person. I suspect not, but it may be that for me, an ordinary man, the muse, being the Other, in my discourse (if only there) naturally enough assumes a feminine persona, so for a king the Muse might not just be a she, the queen in Drottningholm, the royal concubine if any, the nursemaid he remembers from the gloomy tower, but might in fact be all of you, his people. The king's muse might be *they*, as Paul Claudel supposed, in his Catholic piety, that the muse must be Grace.

Or the muse might be the wound that you leave in my heart, my speaking heart. You, whom old Whitman called by your truest name, "you, whoever you are, holding me now in your hand."

27 February 2007

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**Arcane weather.** Or:  
weather is our arcane.  
Cloud. Clouds tell.  
Winds speak. Memnon  
everyone. Even light  
is part of it.

Let light  
have its say. Doesn't  
have to be *splendore*  
or even a "little rush light"  
even, a match, flashlight  
you crank by hand  
to light your way  
when the car breaks down.

But mostly wind.  
To say. And let  
explain. By eye  
to follow, by skin,  
where the wind goes  
and know its origin  
by feel.

Its messages.  
There is weather  
for everyone,  
blind or dead or dumb  
always a sensory  
instruction from the weather  
comes. The simple heat.  
The castle chill.  
I feel it in my shoulder  
now, the obvious thing  
I finally write down  
obedient to nothing  
more portentous than  
my skin and its shivers.  
It shivers. But the sun.

28 February 2007

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Then the words can catch her as she falls  
the divine interventions of an early supper  
silencing the desperate fancies Bovary by  
Bovary into the quiet peasant fricassee,  
be with me, bondswomen, because you all  
belong to your desires, slaves like me,  
someone who wants something is never free.

Caught between desired and desired some  
times a space opens into quietness, peace  
if not contentment, contentment if not  
delight, delight if not completion, all  
this is still before you, choose not to choose,  
the beauty is in the indecision, the love  
you want so much is an empty glove

still shaped by the hand you will never  
feel again caress your waist or privacies  
though the instructive form lasts forever  
shaping your understanding of everything  
from the weather to classical philology,  
this missing feel that you still feel,  
that seals you as its own with its faint seal.

28 February 2007

[last scene of *Capriccio*]