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Something is always matter.

It budes

none too easy or

the bird of it

chants on some tree

the also has problems of its own

and can't you see

all this seeing and hearing

is spirit, the lightness, the soft

awayness of the thought,

hearing without listening

is what makes us human,

makes us mind.

17 January 2006

## REDHEADS

What a fine red-headed woodpecker  
at the feeder, what a fine  
trinity of fat mourning doves  
dithering underneath it,

and what a fine sun to show me this,  
red-headed too at morning –  
rain coming, take warning –  
even after the first one flies away.

17 January 2006

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Sometimes things are done  
and then. Sometimes we say  
*when all is said and done*  
but when will that be?

When all is said  
there is no more to say,  
and all is done – we learn  
that the end of saying  
is also the end of doing.

Evidently we speak the world into shape.  
And what we do  
is speaking –

but *actions speak louder than*  
*words* my mother said,  
I listened, is listening  
an action too? Is *just standing there*  
also doing something?

Some many things have been said.  
So many crosses mounted  
on the way to so many skies.  
So many feathers on so many birds  
but not even one on my cloak—  
yet I claim to be king of the sky  
and doesn't saying make it so?

17 January 2006

## IKEBANA

Accord – the one is sleeping.  
Rage or rush – let the darkness in !  
Big starry yellow mum,  
terraced spikes of eucalyptus,  
a few mistinguettes. Flower  
arrangement, holy day of obligation  
this very day, Feast of St. Now  
the Only. Say your mass in me.

17 January 2006

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To whom does the balcony speak  
when no Juliet's there to distract it?

A hand cupped to hold the sky  
is why, and nothing matters.

Down below, Jesus passes through the crowded street.

17 January 2006

## EARTH FROM ABOVE

for Esther

as if we understood  
an orange on a white plate  
or on an orange tree,  
I had one once  
in the San Gabriels  
a house a little while  
on clear mornings  
you could look out  
over the whole basin  
and see the flash  
of the high surf breaking  
off Costa Mesa  
miles south or  
orange on my orange tree.  
Not my tree.  
You can't own  
something like that,  
or the avocado,  
the lemon, the hibiscus  
that marched around the house  
and made every window  
full of scarlet,  
can you imagine ever

getting tired of that?

Tired of the earth,

the oranges, lemons,

surfers, miles and miles,

the whole city

like something in your lap?

17 January 2006

## TEN HOWLER MONKEYS CALLING MY NAME

*Mocking my silence –*

*silence is so pretentious, don't you think?*

I know the taste of limestone and I tell.

I know the aftertaste of green, the sly  
intoxication of the apple leaf,  
the poison cherry,

I know the rattle-bird that pounces on the almost dead  
and makes them live again,

I know the stone that knows how to talk,  
the perfect mirror that shows no face.

I know the little flame that lives in salt  
I use it to warm my hands  
I read the cave wall by its light  
the niter maps, the pornography of crack

I know the sand that thinks beneath the fingernail  
scraped from the time to tried  
to scratch the sun's face  
when I was mad at her for all her perfidy,  
loving everybody just as much as me  
but we forgive each other now  
but still I save her little sandy thinking

I know the ridge to follow up the hill  
that brings me to a broken well  
so far above the water table  
it's always dry, I sit and wonder,  
why would they dig a well so high,  
a well of wonder  
up above everything  
where does it go  
when it goes down

I know the fear that walks in simple clothes  
in ordinary daylight  
like the priest on his way to the bank,  
nobody here but fear,  
fear and me

keep each other company,  
    how timidly we kiss,  
nibble at the ear or  
one hand gently jammed against the chest,

I know how to swallow night  
and spit out stars,  
    how to rig a tepee so the wind  
does all the cooking and the smoke  
    turns into quartz  
    I wear on all my fingers  
but even they can't stop the tears  
    and I don't know why I'm crying, do you?

I know what a rabbit knows running through deep grass.

*The names of everything are easy to recall,  
    all but my own.*

18 January 2006

On the Day 10 Ba'ts'

## MANON

]

*En garde!*, it's an opera, Fred,  
I mean the music means you,  
deeps you, chugalugs you  
into its own triste histoire.

She died in Louisiana. A drought  
made out of water, dead goats  
from upriver where lepers live,  
all sung loudly in Italian.

Say a prayer for her, tenor,  
you and your kind (love, love,  
love) brought her pretty bones  
to this pass. Her name, Manon,  
meant Yes, but No. All permission  
and no commitment.

The world  
is scared of people like us,  
they want the dotted line,  
the metronome, not the plumpish  
*spinto* gasping free-form his  
tuneless sob, o god of music.

Now it's over and you never  
drew your sword. We walk  
sort of at peace, tranquil even  
in the forgiveness extended  
to us freely by the recent dead.

18 January 2006

Red Hook

=====

The shape of things  
gone by the glue  
that holds the eye  
firm to the beheld

the water pistol moon  
the Santa Ana aftermath  
street signs torn down  
scatter the hot wind

I want to be a sailor, *nauta*,  
crony, capable of irony,  
seduced by salt –  
my blood is dragon's blood

I never told you that.  
Love me, pine tree,  
love me, sea. Shame  
is my splendor.

19 January 2006

Poughkeepsie

## THE WOODEN INDIAN'S AGITATION

Samuel Constantine Raffinesque  
among the Tsalagi  
measured the phallic potency of flowers,

the dreams of moss. *Mon heros !*  
Naked botany.

Information

is the real garden,

the world began with looking around.

His palms

crimson from raspberries, porphyry,

blue from huckleberries

pressed against a birch tree

and the bark remembered.

And this is to be seen in your deep sleep.

19 January 2006

## THE FEZ

Hassan certainty  
valley full of dangerous  
dreams. Society  
of the black fez  
meets every Tuesday  
in the Automat  
on 57<sup>th</sup> Street  
long after that venue  
is otherwise deployed.  
But what is time  
to a Turk? Blue-eyed  
almost, or more  
pale jade opaque,  
a sentient murk.  
All times are coincident.  
All black hats are green.

20 January 2006

Hudson

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I kiss the flame that knows you greenly  
because winter falters also and one traces  
nicked in rock that said your mother's name  
or hers or his and all the clocks one night  
vanished in the morning and who was a bell  
to you then dear friend, a bird, an answer?  
Shut up and tell me. Go sleep and seek.  
Random information is our lovely radio,  
your eyes are holograms, ok? Believe me.  
Try. Believe your knee, a decent gizmo  
for all our walkathons. Gravity  
creeps down the tree, every single leaf  
is a tongue, capisce? And grass I saw  
today, wheels and whole machineries of grass  
spilling up the hillsides and there were fields  
between me and the river, and big bare trees  
soft as amber in the afterlight – a kind  
of indecisive but compassionated gold.  
Waiting for a table brings you close to history.  
Blue caps on white water bay I am asleep.

20 January 2006

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so, things waiting. mosques  
and entrances, steeples  
I make with my fingers,  
praying with my hands.

into the dark, with you.  
as if a cave, you, pale  
with fishes and a trim moon  
setting so light comes in

everything mouth.  
enclosures, mighty music  
of being in. the drum  
the flute all the stuff

they know to remember  
my hands forget.  
churches, everything church.  
no way out from worship.

20 January 2006

## ALLIES

Are you sure you're a person  
not an animal? Look at your hands.  
How much blood have they shed?  
Do real people kill? Look at your eyes  
in the mirror – look how far they go  
inside, all the way back,  
mountains and woods, can't you see  
back there the campfire of the beginning?

You don't know who you are.  
The blood when someone cuts you  
or the moon makes you flow – what is that  
water, why do you need so much of it,  
and what do you do that makes it so red?

And if you lose so little of it  
your life goes – why is that?  
You don't know what's going on,  
you only know you are a journey,  
in winter, from a place  
you can't remember to a destination  
you can't imagine, no one  
has ever told you its name.

Count the pores on your skin  
some night when you have nothing to do  
—they'll tell you the number of years  
you've been traveling, one pore  
for every hundred years. Only then  
will you guess who I am  
and why I want to go with you,  
stumbling, cursing our shared ignorance.

21 January 2006

## THE NEW CAPACITY

an old grain elevator  
outside a dull town—  
you know the picture,  
flour dust all over everything  
and the last lake dried up  
a geology ago.

Still, we can stuff things in it,  
snapshots, menthol rub,  
my father's cat —Palm Cat—,  
an empty notebook, brown  
shoepolish, a comb with clean teeth.

There still is room, so much  
some people want to measure it  
in feet and syllables and versts  
kilobytes, square meters, cents.

Let them. I sing  
exclusively for my father's cat  
and for the lady.

They make me be  
the measure of myself,  
dusty, but with wet hands,  
midnight in a dull town  
the light still on in my window.

21 January 2006

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Why are the lines longer these days?  
Is it better breath? Or creeping prose?

21 I 06