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When will this speak me again?

The artifice is something  
like a fire. A resemblance.

A glass of milk a child  
disdained to drink  
still stands on the table at midnight.

Midnight milk. With dust on you.  
So many things to decide.  
Discover. Hide. Nail to the wall.

The cross. The frightening sign.  
The appalling fact.  
So busy with remembering that I forget.

13 December 2005

## CAPTIVES

Words. Name

the bad qualities.

Rose. Alabaster.

Pushpin. Brick.

I love these things.

I will invent

a brand new language

just to say them again.

13 December 2005

## WHAT IS COLOR

Watch. An iron-rich  
rock redden in weather.

The way a winter  
days does at sunset.

The ruddy quality  
spoken of by Boehme  
and the prophets –

a naked man  
standing in a crowd  
crying out in an unknown language.

13 December 2005

## IF THEN

A curve measured.

A road curses.

A shelf with jars

filled. Ah Lincoln

you should have let them

go. There is no holiness

in number. Not even one.

Almonds in their season,

yes. Or on the cold prairie

hard red wheat come June.

13 December 2005

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Godnesses and light  
spring out of snow  
the meager season  
when it all has to be me  
and you and nobody  
else, we have to make up  
the sky and the earth  
create a history  
that hurts nobody  
then we can say  
the foolish family things  
the Christmassy  
habitat of all the bad  
art and music and religion  
from which (it's up  
to you) the beauty comes.

14 December 2005

## Are you a Christian?

Christ forgave everyone, even the ones who tortured him.

Christ did not try to control or influence the government. “My kingdom is not of this world” is his only political manifesto.

Christ did not trust experts, the scribes and Pharisees.

Christ helped the poor and the rich, the foreigner and the native.

Christ turned water into wine to make people happy at a party.

Christ cured lepers without a sermon, and gave sight back to the blind without asking their opinions about religion and politics.

Christ kept his distance from the official religious authorities of his day, but they killed Him anyhow.

Christ raised Lazarus from the dead without making him sign a pledge or make a donation.

Christ healed the sick without hospitals.

Christ fed the hungry without making them work for welfare.

Christ was led to the high places and offered grants and foundations and political power over congress and the courts – and Christ rejected the Satan who offered them.

Are you a Christian? If so, I guess you should behave like Christ too.

=====

Ballroom snow

blue jays up to their bellies in,

penguining along by hops

till a place at the feeder's clear.

Their kind. The approximations

grown so specific.

They are different so we can learn to see.

\*

But what the looking at actually sees,

the taxonomy of now

is all a poem is,

to tell what *this* is

wherever you look.

A poem is a portable now.

\*

Scansion of the weather—  
belonging to what happens  
makes us happy as we can be  
which usually isn't very,  
being there together, sufferers  
of a common storm.

Is that a castaway too,  
my love's love, a friend's friendship,  
something each happens on  
upon the *isola*, the lonely island of to be?

14 December 2005

=====

Will there ever  
be enough weather  
to carve a door in it

open and go out?

Or is it *in*,

the other side of what happens?

14 XII 05

=====

The taste of seawater  
changes you.

There is a sort of mercy  
in what just barely manages  
to happen to you:  
a wave that wets  
the tip only the tip of your shoe  
and doesn't do what it could do,  
drench and soak, no,  
it is a faint kiss  
from the world of matter in motion –  
you too are a citizen,  
you too are a flower in the manifold,  
a fine phrase in its endless paragraph.

14 December 2005

## MIDDLE EUROPEAN SONNET 1

Belletristic notary leaving town  
his tickets to the opera stay behind  
*Schicksalsmacht* but sung in the original—  
he gets edgy when he sees her sing  
naked in nun's habit grieving grieving  
so bleak on the Cliff of Suicides  
shrilling on about god love and vengeance  
you never know what your best friend might do.

Frankly he gets scared. Destiny  
is a fool's name for dance—  
the waltz goes on no matter what  
as long as matter's here to grope—  
he's left politeness behind him long ago.  
But the tune is subtly changing all the time.

15 December 2005

## MIDDLE EUROPEAN SONNET 2

When I decided I would build a house  
I looked up into the sky and studied  
until I saw the shape of a house in it  
coming down. When the shadow touched my field  
I measured it and told the contractor  
what kind and how much. He did the rest.  
But I can't bring myself to move in—  
my eyes are heavy, and the coral beads  
praying in my fingers get colder all the time.  
The house fits the earth but doesn't fit me.  
I told you long ago I was an exile  
and you thought that was just romantic crap  
but look – not a door on earth I can fit through.  
Not even in your cathedral can I stand upright.

15 December 2005

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Every morning the sun wakes up  
and makes a list of what to shine on,  
runs out of time, tears it up  
and all day long does the best she can.

15 December 2005

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What you need is

a gold hem and

a long slow word

spoken around you

I will give you all this

the morning said.

(sent to Keely McDonald to work words into,  
sometime 2004)

found 15 XII 05

## CHRISTMAS AND WE'RE STILL IN EDEN

As if all human history had to do  
was chop the tree down fast enough to see  
the birds still chattering as they fell  
hurtless through the magic air you only  
hope is what you just breathed out to quicken  
some slime in your hands. But which came first,  
the clay or the breath? Who breathed in  
when God breathed out? *A ring for your finger,*  
*a kiss for your toes,* it's Christmas now so  
nobody supposes, everybody knows.  
Knowledge is what makes the tree light up  
and the illiterate cat run out of the room.  
Knowledge is what hurts. We got what we want  
not the fruit but the whole tree, shadow and  
branches and roots but the bird flies away.

16 December 2005

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Don't eat out – even the Carnegie  
Deli or Wolff's or Bloom's –  
stay home and watch the wall.  
The wall is what protects you.  
Love it. Take care. Worry  
about it daily as I do lest it  
fall. It is what makes you you.  
Skin is only the shadow of it,  
a lover's touch is just some sunshine  
falling on it late afternoon.  
The wall is all. Underneath it  
you hope the ground is firm. You hope  
nothing happens to its head. A wall is always  
thinking the strong good thoughts of a wall.

16 December 2005

=====

Hug a jungle  
and let the rain  
squeeze out

her eyes found me  
from that sleek underbrush  
a kind of creeping meaning

rippling through the night  
the meaty consequences  
droll trees sagacious silences

this was a river  
I made it run through her  
there are enough words already

left in the book  
cash slipped coins into slots  
slipping parts into parts

I want to know why she was there  
why she accepted humiliation  
and she answers calmly:

To know a place  
really know it

is to be humiliated  
by it.

The tourist comes home  
fucked by her experience

sore from the preposterous  
insertions of

so large an animal  
as another country is

into her small body.

To travel

is to gather pain  
the way birds pick pebbles

to lodge in their crop:  
to take pain in

that you come to use  
to grind the common facts

of your own sad land.

I began nowhere

and went everywhere

until it hurt enough

for me to be home.

16 December 2005

κοινή

or in common speech

I say your name

the names came first

all language built from that.

16 December 2005