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**Proof by exhaustion
as if the orange-flanked bird
always on the highest
branch of whatever bush
knew something only light can tell**

**and tries to tell us—
we have words for everything but this.**

1 December 2014

OPUS GENETICUM

**Arrogant ancestors
mind my mind—**

**I have to do all my
speculations with their
swords, bagpipes, cathedrals—**

**o I am so stone
they make me, carved
with their instructions**

**to do now what long
ago they had in mind**

to do to the world.

1 December 2014

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**Exemplary. As a teacher
slips into a goldfish bowl
in front of her class, sings
Now I am small and golden
and still am me. Now you
must learn how to become
whatever comes to mind.
Grow up instantly! Come with me!
To the other side! And here we are.**

**1 December 2014
Kingston**

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**But there is choosing to be done.
A living thing from down sea
learns our language, often
before we do. When we eat some
poor creature it becomes us and we
take on its destiny, or as much of it
as fits. Slowly New Englanders
turn into clams, relish silence
and privacy. Argentines grow horns
and shamle around. And Chinese
grow innumerable as gains of rice.**

1 December 2014

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**He walked into his reflection
and disappeared. Glass
had always been the most magical
substance he knew. Or seemed.**

**Are we there yet, on the trail
of his vanishing? Sun glint
window a little dusty, winter.**

**No trace I see, as if his effects
had all vanished with their cause.
I could hear furniture moving about,
a truck came by and went. That's all.**

**Did you try crying out loud to him?
I called his name, and made animal noises
to prove it was me. Answer none.**

**Did you try walking into the reflection too?
His had gone with him, and when I went
into my own I was alone with myself
but at least I felt closer to him then.**

2 December 2014

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**I'm too much of a Protestant
to be definite. *As if*
is my morning anthem,
let all the certainties go
rafting with the obvious,
leave me comfortably
vexed with doubts. Or
am I too Catholic for that?**

2 December 2014

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**If a man doesn't know
what religion he is
there's hope for him yet.**

2.XII.14

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**Suppose it had something to do with mercy
or an abandoned mental hospital on fire
for days among the pine woods nobody knows**

**how do things begin or end if they ever do
you're listening to Schumann I sit at the keyboard
sick with the varieties of meaning. Mean me!**

**I have cried more than once in this life
let alone all the others. Was Lovecraft in Brooklyn
when I was born? Do things really reach out**

**and touch us as we pass by? Rats in the sewers
nourished by what we are no longer, essence
and excrement, Thomist philosophy full of tears,**

**noble forbearance, Empire Boulevard, handball,
diners are the warmest venues, all the letters
are there but in the wrong order. This is only Eden.**

2 December 2014

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**Never enough manifestoes.
We need a new Index too
of Books Forbidden
by virtue of dullness or vapidty.
Lisez/Le Lisez Pas cried the Sur-
Realists, surly as they were zany,
we need lists of forbidden
thoughts and deeds to teach us
how to sin. We need young woman
screaming new revelations
in the business district, young men
peddling pamphlets, old men
trying to do yoga in the park,
contradictions everywhere, funerals
on roller coasters, solemn weddings
on the merry-go-round. And names,
more names for old things, more things
for ancient languages to name,
more stars in the sky, more magazines
nobody reads, more bronze statues
gazing on our boulevards with living eyes.**

2 December 2014

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**Cold but birds
are singing near
in the bare trees
knowing what they do**

**so many things so
many interpretations
of the barren air
hungry with music.**

2 December 2014

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We know little things about big things—

**a child leans over the railing on a bridge
lets his spit drop from his lips to the river
the river goes down and engages the sea**

what we say stays spoken forever.

3 December 2014

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**I *am* doing something
about climate change.
I'm writing some words
that have never before
been written down
precisely like this. It may
even be a poem, might
even be about a tree.**

3 December 2014

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**It takes a long time
to get nowhere.
Everywhere
keeps closing in.**

3 December 2014

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**Gnomic morning
after ice and rain
thaw enough
to mollify
sidewalk and step.
And in the woods
across the street
something cowering.**

3 December 2014

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1.

Things we have had no
chance to lose.

The wheel
perceiving, the tooth
traveling by day. Believing.

We know
much less than we know.

2.

Love is good for poetry
because it makes us breathe
faster, we write
with pure metabolism
the only thing that isn't in a book.

3.

When the breath fails us
we tell stories about dead queens.
Enobarbus (Bronze Beard
or Wine Beard, who will decide?)
comes along and rhapsodizes,
I know, I was him once, him too.
I wandered the channels of my desire

until they delta'd out into silence.

4.

**I turn round and see you back there
under the spectacular sunset over America.**

**I am a voice offshore
like the wind but making less sense.**

3 December 2014

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**I only doubt it till it starts to sing.
Then it remembers who I am in me
and lets it be. We let each other.
Or music is always a *permission*
yet is true. That's what you tell
if you're really you. Not someone
who has bought something in the market
but someone who finally knows.**

4 December 2014

== == == ==

**We lead the words astray,
we pollard them with purposes
no word wants to enforce.**

**A word is an animal
more or less like me,**

**needs no Egypt of slaves
and quarry. Words are pines
and spruces and firs,
shapely in their own arisen
forms pleasing to circumstance,
comfortable to birds.**

So be quiet as a word.

4 December 2014

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**Men are cold at night
because they don't listen.
Words that other people say
are sunshine, loud enough
to keep me warm.**

**How can women bear
the self-involvement
as all a man ever offers?**

**Someday we have to learn
to unscrew the hinges so the doors
stay ever open.**

4 December 2014

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**Can I be here where I began
at the table attending to crows**

**scribe of any weather
cares to flounce through town**

scaring me with its suchness?

4 December 2014

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**So I will be curt
though long loops best**

**I will be brief
and say it only twice**

**or thrice the way
the old ones said**

taking their time.

4 December 2014