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[for 28 ACRES]

**And all we want to do
is make heaven on earth**

**To do so, walk along looking at the sky
then walk back looking at the ground**

**or just look down—
*as above, so below***

**the rough terrain you stand on
is made of God.**

**As the ancients said
in their pompous yet comforting way
there is no heaven
there is only here,**

**here, she said,
let me show you around.**

19 December 2014

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**Unpiece the evidence
fingertip by fingertip
this place is what it tells you**

clinamen, asif deciding

**In this country
we vote with our feet**

**the land lets you belong
or be long,
lets you take part**

**the land is what's left of me
the bird said, flew away, left
not even his shadow behind.**

19 December 2014

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**Imagine me waiting
then wonder**

**What is it for,
such a window
and why?**

**The vacant
always seems close
you feel the orchestra
is getting closer
 the music
wants something from me.**

**Who does it want
me to be?**

**The stream outside is loud
its own dialect
to hear in dream,
not white sound
 something bluer
browner clearer cleaner
something music forgot**

**when Apollo snatched my pipes away
but left my skin**

for a little while longer intact.

**Is that just dreamstuff, the dust
printed in books,**

sweet everlasting lies?

**The orchestra roiling,
something's coming,**

**isn't it strange to be alive
after so many deaths?**

**19 December 2014
listening to Martinu's 1st**

BY THE WATERS OF METAMBESEN

**Wooden duck
tail feathers prompt
above a stream
where other species only.**

**Play. Words are meant
for that, to please gods
aloft or abaft with our jabber,
our sweet nothings
chanted to the empty air
in pure praise,**

**praise of being.
Allegro always, the horses
prance in the courtyard,
I hear them, they wake me,
the bells glong in the steeple,
the ululations of the muedhdhin
the rabbi's sighs,**

**Melville heard them all
in *Clarel*, his youth
fumbled through Palestine
looking for the Holy Land**

**as if the fields stretching
south of Albany, the paved**

**promenade past the Customs House
at the Battery, the cobbled
dangers of New Be'ford
were not Holy too,**

**dear Christ, this half acre
of muddy grass on shale
of mine is Jerusalem,
this brook is Jordan,
Ganges, just look down,
the holy Danube splashing
my insolent toes,
my stupid paper coffee cup
floating on it down
to the everlasting sea.**

***They asked the Rebbe Why do men no loner see G-d?
He answered, Because nowadays we walk around never
looking down.***

19 December 2014

(towards 28)

**All we really have to do
I said, is stand
or sit here for a long time
thinking whatever comes to mind
then saying it.
That is Art.**

**But she, swishing the hem
of her long bluegreen gown
modestly round her ankles
as if to caress the very
grass we stood on (poor
winter grass, pale, needing
our affection) answered
Art is more than that,
not so relaxed except at first,
later fierce, fulminating
in the skull, Homer calls it
war, *polemos*, and means
not men fighting with other
men or the gods or the river
but with the very things you,
are you a poet, so revere.
Not what comes to mind
but what you do with it, strong
with measures and with forms,
knowing how things fit**

**together, how they work
when you tumble all your thinking
out onto the ground and begin.
Where you end is where we start.
Everything just comes to mind,
art is what you do with it,
the hard thing, the other people thing.**

19 December 2014

DISORDER

**Getting ready to listen, shape
a hard word big as a papaya
and start to say it...**

graphite

**the air broken, the light
disabled, gravity on the fritz,
a hand reaches out and finds
*its own skin lurking in the mist***

as Lovecraft would say

**nothing has much meaning now
or too much, the indecisive amorist
fumbles under the front seat
and finds a candy wrapper still sticky
with dust plump on the stickum,**

**what can we do
with all the world we used**

**gone now like
the dark chocolate from the paper**

didn't it somehow turn into him?

music lets me remember

as I would say,

sticking to the script.

I wrote the stupid thing I'd better stay with it

you could have come to see me

but you didn't come

birds were in the leafless trees

my lap was empty

just a few jagged crumbs of tortilla

can you call those corn things crumbs?

because lunch loves us too

why didn't you come

why did I bother putting a door in the wall

if not for you

If not for you

I would have left here long ago

following the stream to the river

river to sea

following the sea to the horizon

then following the sky

there must be more to me than that

but the sky said No

**there's only one you
(meaning me, I think)
to go all those directions
at once to all those many
destinations, come on
you can do it, all
you need is gravity**

all you need to do is fall.

**Stumbling is easy
but falling is the hardest thing of all.**

19 December 2014

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**The people who write old
came by and caroled
but we closed the casement—**

**nuff song! we said,
you need to tell us something**

but we couldn't hear them if they did.

20 December 2014

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**Light and the flowers marry on her lap
there are spiritual forces at work here
curls of cat fur under the ottoman
squashed flat, dust on the windowpane
shimmering with narrative, remember**

***black milk of* but he said forget that poem
too many manings to hold in one girl's head
maybe people really need dogs after all
to think about something else, a dog
is always something else, silence, be nice,**

**Christians sharpening their adverbs against
the rule of pleasure, the food tastes different
something must have happened in the night
try to remember but we can't, eat, eat,
grandmother's watching you from the grave.**

**It's time to change the number system
it really is, crows flock over the quickway
through Poughkeepsie signaling that, uncountable
metonymy, we need a break from school
the wind will still be there when you get back.**

**Such an inspiration to be sung I mean young
conical habit of the fir trees, steep
mortgage on our chosen planet where
everything points up and falls down
there's history for you, Uncle Fred.**

**Delight in debate? Call Lily for an argument
Delight in semaphores? Be a train
hurting between Narrowsburg and Callicoon
hoot past Geary's boarding house, help the sky
forget for once its opalescent vacancy**

**If we were people we could play
but we are little children and must work
memorizing nonsense while nice nuns
supervise as we grow fastidious and dumb
like mail order brides or mistletoe**

**Now do you remember, of course not, nothing
plus nothing equals something else you can't
exactly remember but it has roses in it,
a spinnaker, someone juggling two flags,
naked dancing in the sea foam—that sort of life.**

20 December 2014

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**I don't know what I'm seeing
I'm seeing a circle
growing less non-committal,**

**willing itself corners
the way a thirteen-year-old sneaks cigarettes**

**where are your eyes
it asks me**

**halfway home—
a square is always a person,
a family, a consort of edges**

simultaneously the four faces of God.

**20 December 2014
(towards Gret)**

TOWARDS SOLSTICE

**Mercury ahead of the Sun
racing towards sunstead
marked features in our discourse
make me as foreigner, daddy,
I want my Other.**

**Oh I am so other
I wear a paper bag tohide my face
nobody loves me I'm so other**

**but over there it's easy
joy in the forest among the speechless trees.**

21 December 2014

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**We can make sense of anything
because sense is something we make**

we and we alone?

**A wooden fence
a kind of miracle
to be separate and to be near?**

**Birds at the feeder
no one knows my name.**

21 December 2014

AT THE OPÉRA

**There has to be a ballet in the second act
no matter how many die before the sextet
brings the first act to a close. Who will dance?
We know the students at the Imperial School
are waiting their chance, skinny girls with thick
thighs, boys unsure about what comes next,
but all in pretty costumes; swans and foxes.
But what has that got to do with the Devil,
or sad tenor who ventures everything to sing
at the foot of the maiden's tower, the old nun
who knows everything but won't reveal it,
the recruiting sergeant's secret love life,
the Russian pilgrim's sudden suicide?
The dancers know how to figure it all out,
the body tells them and they know how to hear.
But why do we have to put up with all that music?
Horns and strings distract us from the wisdom
of muscle and bone and those pale wistful
faces void of thought but not of meaning.**

21 December 2014

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**Don't worry if I use the word
God in a poem,
God will come back,
the First Explanation
always comes back
as one by one the others
fall away. And no one ever
looks in the mirror.
Even though that's why God
gave men beards to shave
and made women to be beautiful.**

**We are in a time of the world
when all the short words
are in disrepute. Just wait.
The monosyllable will save us yet.**

21 December 2014