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High-spirited
oaf in paradise
no Hebrew and some Greek
I found a cross and leaned on it,
I found a wheel and flew
out beyond the cornice of the world
where truant angels stand and guess the news—

but it wasn't light I was after
it was white, itself, the absolute,
a white hand stretched out.
What must I be if it stretches out to me?

4 October 2010

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So many ways it was to be white
close and rugged, long as your father takes
to smoke his affordable Connecticut cigar
wide as the gull at peace on upping currents of the air
when the island rises from the torpor of dawn
hand over hand until you wake.

4 October 2010

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Can it go further?
Is there dancing even
to be done by the nimble
nibbling by the humble
liturgy by lethargy,
agates to scour up from sand
after the autumn storm,
whistles to blow by lips
too precious to say words?
Grow up, language—
nobody cares. “and that’s
alone at last my liberty.”

4 October 2010

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I love a lighthouse
because it is white.
A rainstorm brings
fire—hard that is
to understand.
Four elements but
how many they are.
I lost a lighthouse
because its white
folded into the cloud
and the cloud faded
into the sea. I wish
I could be a child
again instead of
being a child still.

4 October 2010

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Swashbuckling poltroon
privateering through a sea of names
touching each one in the bland hope
someone will touch me. Name me.
Wanhope and piracy make do,
necessity of fantasy. In the exact
middle of the sea
the secret apple tree.

4 October 2010

RECKONING

Less here than what I meant—
helmsman! hoist your trumpet for the light
we brought a Fairy with us though they hate the sea,
bring him up on deck and he will charm and spell
and sing and taradiddle till the dark comes back
so we can sail deeper into the invisible design.

4 October 2010

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Because this is the only journey, we thought
we were beginning and at the exact
moment we set out we came to the end.
Monkeys chatted on the leafy shores
and agate pebbles winked in moonlight on the beach—

all just as you'd expect, you too
have been here never, just like us,
citizens of aftermath

with drenched clothes
stumbling up a slope.

The sea went away
having spoken all its lines
flawlessly, but with a certain
absence of affect
and we were home.

4 October 2010

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But is this where I'm supposed to be
I who vaunted with my gilded wings
and out-palavered monkeys in their trees?

I thought I was a child in love
with someone whose hand reached out
I hoped to me, how could there be
so much ocean in that?

White

bikini maybe, bleached clam shell,
pale cloud over Overlook, yes,
white trim on an old red barn—
that all makes sense.

But I wasn't there
when the sense got made,
now it's all looking for and asking after
and give her my love when you see her
I don't think I ever will.

4 October 2010

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And it doesn't have to be so sad—
it's not a tragedy to walk on a beach
alone, though all the waves and clouds
make it feel bigger than Oedipus and *Odyssey*.
Movie music hustling down the wind

4 October 2010

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Children detect falsity of feeling
unless the false is bundled up in art.
O tragic impostures of sheer narrative.

They gasp at the beauty of what they think it means
thrilled with what it makes them feel
never mind the devious packagers—

poets and painters and film makers and such.
The sign is truer than the one who makes it—

that makes childhood bliss and agony
because the sign they read is always true,
always works its way into the brain and heart—

a calm white hand reaches down towards the child
the child yields its whole life into it forever.

4 October 2010

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Is it better to have no name?
Just hair thick on your head
and scant on your arms
and shuffle through the surf
dry above the knees, watching
the day fade in and out of mist?

How old the light is! You wonder
what all the fuss is about,
distances and tragedy and signs in the night.
Your bare feet tell you, you'll never
be anywhere but this, stay with what
I tell you and ask yourself who's listening.

4 October 2010

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It is a different thing
to be alive and zen
eating the neighborhood
into armed conflict.

Religion like every other human eccentricity (anything that separates us from animals) has its good and its bad. Christianity makes murderous crusades and ethereal cathedrals. Zen makes fierce warriors and quiet gardens.

But at the center of most things
a glum toad sits—
the ravenous ego, that Moloch, me.

Shut off the sermon, the feds don't like it
when you talk against the ego—
I'm the ego and I vote. I'm the ego and I buy.

Without the ego no consumer state, no family
values, no war...

I told you to shut up,
it's only the ego that keeps you talking,
you could be silent as a flower
and just give pleasure.

5 October 2010

YOU

If I could fill the world with language
might be able to hear what I am saying to.

5.X.10

DIAGNOSIS

An odd case of La Tourette's syndrome—
I whisper sentences that other people mean.

5.X.10

SPECIAL KNOWLEDGE

hand on a shoulder
reach into the vault
the airless kiss of money
stifled him
old movie in a white hat
the cameraman long dead
must be laughing through his lens
nothing ever happens
to the woman—
whose shoulder left
these bruises on my fingers?
Tomorrow Istanbul yesterday the world
cat on a lap
an allergy to parakeets
the suburbs of heaven overlap the banlieus of hell—
plural in x is obsolete—
Equimaux escalating harsh plateau—
as the lap is obsolete in a fitness world
we jog side by side the dog keeps pace
intimate evidence all around us
driven by will
book tends to fall
open to the middle—

learn from this, o theorists,
be still and let the silence throb
or is it all cut and paste with you
an origami of the mind
to turn all the thin old ideas
briefly into novelty,
giraffes lecturing at the Sorbonne?

No noontime ever
in this polity.
I mean a brave disease
to turn your day around,
the actual is always obsolete
you need a thousand
footnotes just for yesterday,

opalescent azure
a car slowly in the rain
silver car silver rain
maple leaves jigsaw the road
we are close to the edge now
can air sustain the willful step

suicide girls of East London
what will we do when we aren't alive
mortal satisfactions
isn't the wound of life

enough without the kill of death?

the Rapture is over
the saints left long ago
and Oddiyana empty now
a thousand years,

get over it, we're here forever
unless this is heaven
then our stay is limited—
checkout time we're back to work again
raising eyelids in the mortal world,
heaven after all,
the rungs of the chair the bones of her back.

5 October 2010

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The finger feel of something alive
trumpet call or telephone it all means me
when someone touches you it means the battle has begun
the me against the otherly. Never win
and never altogether lose.

Let me touch you on the other hand—
same battlefield beneath a different flag.
You hoist the sky above you and I kneel down.
How soft the mud is of pleasing you.
Je vais dormir. It is the only place I sometimes know.

5 October 2010

ACADEMICS

A scholar is a teacher with a dirty carburetor.

A teacher is a scholar run out of gas.

5.X.10