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River from the lake
where the first men lived
a schooner up the Rhône
into innavigable reaches
where slow people talk
by gouging rocks cliffs
with signs they live by
life after life. We belong
to our landscape. Shapes
shape us. Simple as that.
Deep down we all are Swiss.

9 October 2010
A list of paltry pleasures
has to start with me.
Savor my identity
while a cloud passes
nimbly over middle heaven.
I am what I think. If anything.
When I’m asleep you’re mostly
safe, unless we endure
dream tangencies and our selves
touch somehow in the zero
distances of sleep. I saw you
last in Budapest. You
never saw me at all.

9 October 2010
INSTRUMENT

Nameless pen, bought along the Bodensee, (Rorschach maybe, big statue of Saint Jakob shoulder to the lake) squeaks when it writes like a hundred years ago when all our pens knew how to sing.

Now only businessmen sign their impressive names smooth on documents that mostly further impoverish the poor.

This squeaking instrument reassures me I will do little harm with what I write, orphan no one. Poets are relatively good physicians: to begin with do no harm.

Whatever torment is around we hide it in our own wounds—
pain helps us never to forget
what planet we’re still on
and who you are and how
to open up our mouths
in quiet sentimental
unalarming screams.

9 October 2010
KEEPING THE CURIA WAITING

The new Pope changes his socks:
This too is my body.
I am the glorious impostor
appointed by Spirit to
keep men from the book
and what it says in there
he said. Or maybe I
will say the word too
that I once heard him say
and I’ll give back this
stone to its maker.
And all the laws are wrong
except what he said.
Outside in the antechamber
they’re murmuring about me,
oh he’s having his scruples again.

9 October 2010
Opinionless
the morning

Take that and be healed.

9.X.10
THE RINGS

Time is waiting for us
in the tree.
When I was young
they showed me once
the years all rolled up
inside a cedar.
I stand beside my
own now linden tree
and wonder how
much is left for me,
glad that each year
gets bigger than the last.

9 October 2010
Time is stored
in everything—
is it the touch
of human skin
that lets it out.

9 October 2010
Miracles enough to keep atheists edgy
but Rapture reviles me for disbelief
so I have come to this doomed lake
seeking the equilibrium only
water knows. I present myself
to the sunrise, send my envois
to chant at the noonday sun
and at night lie down with every
shadow, hoping the silence
of the world will come
visit me like a woman
fast asleep on my lap.

10 October 2010
Can motivation shuck corn?
Can a single farm stand satisfy
Sunday regattas of Mercedes?

Can we give something back
to the bee? Why do I keep
asking questions, don’t I know
it all already?

And if I don’t,
who does? And why? Wasn’t
there a time –was it a cave –
when we were all in this together?

Isn’t there a license you can buy
entitles you to meaningful
doubt? Or a glass of milk?

What becomes of all the words
we speak? What does a cow
need to know about cheese?

Everything’s a product of our
product, but don’t we, like the moon,
need a night off now and then?

Can’t the wind do some of our work
for us, wind-farms off Nantucket,
bagpiples on the Isle of Skye?
Just write it down—it will look like the answer. It worked for the Bible and Homer, now let it work for me and thee, word without end, Amen.

10 October 2010
A MORALITY

nec spe nec metu

Things taking over.
Moorland manners.
Be civil as sunrise
don’t try to be natural

natural is itself or not
evil out there
waiting to be done
also is natural

only you can do it,
don’t, this landscape
already engraved
deep in your heart.

How could you own it
any better? Hope
is a sad girl
sitting by the fire,

try to rouse her
from depression
to joyous indifference,
take everybody’s side.

10 October 2010
Lie awake at night
frightened of myself,
The snake of me the
dog of me. Who
ever is there to fear.

10 October 2010
Cold sunlight
is the best color.
Silver in moonlight
the best black.

Human thought
pigmented by breath.
Songs are all color,
their words white white

afterimage of a love affair
warm hand of a stranger.

10 October 2010
All of a sudden
I have something to say
so I’d better stop now

there are children waiting for us
and how can we know them
they are waiting for us
but not for something we can say
only for what we do not know

and that, that alone
we can give them

10 October 2010
An office under ground
and everyone can see in
through highline windows up the wall,
clerestory, but nobody does.

We turn out to be intimate—
you know what I mean, know
what I mean to say and wonder why
I’m so slow at saying it.

You are dressed in a Gauguin
we all are amateurs again
and come to market every week
afraid of being cheated and we are

but never know it, or we’re not
and never notice, or we cheat them
and only know it when they cry.
I think you made me cry.

All it ever meant was to be close,
just barely touching but quite distinct
like flowers standing upright in a vase,
a word we each pronounce in different ways.

11 October 2010
Southwest of nowhere
we grow upset from children
we used to know or be.

To lose by death’s desire.
Succumb. The shadow
of a tall rock—they go
to seek shelter from the sun.

A parking lot big as a city
imagine it empty and the sun
beating down, no shelter,
you’re in the middle of it
and what do you do? It is for such
as you that death was made,

originally designed to eject
a mirror of your nervous system
out into no-time space
where it can find once more
a local habitation and a name.

But somehow Nature flunked. Not
enough instruction in the cell—so
another strategy—a life
of meditative calm, focused energy,
compassionate release—is needed.
Then you can flee the parking lot
and find outside a changeling
child that you become
and feare no more the heat of the sunne.

11 October 2010
The porter at the gates
lifted the latch
but held the door shut
with his shoulder—

Give way, I cried, but he
whispered: Say the secret
then I’ll let you in,

There is no secret
I whispered back.
So in I came
to my own empty house.

12 October 2010
POLTER

Turbulence of adolescent
lust. Confusion
is a noisy house inside
the flesh sent out
there where the people
lurk. Ghost in the hand,
ghost in the closet.
At first we thought Demons
but the Priest barked
all his exorcisms,
no work. Or natural
we thought causes—
gravity, electro-
magnetism, even
the Weak Force
that holds us together
making its sly
quantum moves.
But no. It was you
all the time,
you body your sulky
smile, your gaudy
posters on the wall,
your telephone.
Your body
that we gave you
that smug disaster
turned against us
and the plates fly
off the shelves
and the cat howls
at knighting and the table
sashays down the hall
and the fridge keeps
opening and shutting
all night long. The storm
that is your spirit
will pass, a calmer theme
will seize you, you’ll fall
in love and get a job,
be pale and silent
in a silent house
just like us.

12 October 2010
One more word before serenity
breaks in. I meant to say it
yesterday, while the dream was still
warm in mind, how you looked
as you reached up to draw the curtain,
how you looked looking back at me.
But I’ll take them with me and study them.
What I like best about science
is that it is such a close rhyme with silence.

12 October 2010
no obituary needed for J-L G

Hearing it happen
you turn away.
When you look back
the wreckage is gone.
Godard is still alive,
the smell of his cigar
lingers in the footnotes
to all that we’ve seen.
A fox on the table.
A book spread out
on a woman’s behind.
No way for him to die.

12 October 2010