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ARCHAIC SEVENTEENER

So there's all this to worry about
the bookstore closing, the cobbler gone forever
and no more Pinaud lilac lotion at the barbershop.

And nobody speaks Italian anymore,
I try my best with ciao, amore, domani,

but nothing works, not a smile for blocks,
is everybody nohowsexual? Is it all over,
glaciers calving, temperature on the march?
And nobody ever whistles in the street.

So tunelessness has struck the psyche,

even operas are mere declamation, musicals
all opsis and percussion. And yet it's Easter,
a gnat got in my ear, the stream is turbulent,
squills are still blue and yellow daffodils.

I console myself with the obvious,

and smile out the window at passersby
who never knew the things whose loss I moan.

24 April 2011

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The sky remembers—
is that enough to go one,
priest, what of what we feel
right now, with no remembering,

doctor, is that possible
even, some face you never
saw before suddenly means?
What do you do with that

flower sudden in your hand?

25 April 2011

= = = = =

Blame alpha-dogs for everything,
they turn into presidents and popes,
generalissimos, commissars,
nobelistas, best-sellers, serial killers.

We are at their mercy.
Only the old Jews understood—
G-d rebuked every one of their kings.
and G-d began the Bible with *b*.

25 April 2011

= = = = =

The letters, the letters
fall out of the sky,
cranes brought them
Paul saw them over Venice
or geese I see every year
over Mohicanuk
our two-way mirroring
river read

 them where they fall
and read again as wind
says them
in another dialect,
every move and every stand
a sign a message
I'm bound to understand.
Letters, fetters—
Freedom through the bars
the long pretending,
the trying so hard to hear.

25 April 2011

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Resistant to remaining
she flew across the sea.
Leaving me to mud and magic
and all my other middle names.

25 April 2011

= = = = =

Creating daylight
by looking too close—
does the world
want me to see it?

Who should I ask?
The trees know
everything but tell
only their birds.

Wherefore I beg the crows
to disclose what I'm to know.
Meantime, small birds
—wrens, I suppose—

are living in the rafters
of what I thought was my
house but must be theirs
too, everything belongs

to everything, the bitter
grief of money. anger,
owning. Ownership
a darkness on the land.

26 A April 2011

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(And yet and yet
birds own the air.
And quiet observation
seems to own the birds.)

26.IV.11

= = = = =

Capacious ink-chamber of my squid.

Sepia. Pocket cuttlefish

to stain the dry ocean all round me

with Byzantine comparisons.

In the land of metonyms

a simple word is king.

26 April 2011

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Where the water went
before it went inside us
we are membrane beasts,
a self's a feeble envelope
between the sea inside
and the ocean air around us

and for it we struggled to control
all the other membranes
when all the while only the water
means, only the water permanent.

27 April 2011

= = = = =

It is not right to wrist
an end to anything.
Amygdala, fruit
of a flowering tree,
ogival, rich with oil,
can only grow indoors
in this religion.

In all its loveliness
it's a just a form
of what is there,
hard-edged beyond
the dreams of words,
the commonplace,
the door. I see a special
face, I understand the
singular, your word
among the rainstorm
of the imparticular
in which we usually soak.
You are dry land,
Cleopatra, fatherless wit,
a fierce vocabulary,
profile to the sky.
We break words together

to get our nourishment
as common folk break bread,
we break the old
to make a new word speak
and every hour of the
day is dawn. Unknot
the syntax, let the
the sentence sprawl all over
this newly wakened ground
bell-helmeted blue
against yellow shimmer
flowers of our strange new land.

27 April 2011

TO SAY WHAT HAS NOT BEEN THOUGHT

Myth is what is always new.

μυθος always a new word speaks,
seeks,

 mumbled maybe from our own soft lips.

A god is something needs us to speak.

1.

A woman over there though
is seated on a chair,
she is Isis, a sign is the signified,
she sits upon a chair,
when she leaves the room
the chair's still there,
the chair says Isis,

the furniture of any room
recites ancient liturgies
we have never heard—
but hard the listening!
We have to be willing
to hear, and hard the willing,
hard to be so open,

to let your eyes fill with tears
when you look at a chair.

2.

Each trait of human personality
or flesh or speech
is an axiom of theology.
And Isis is what she is
and always more.
A real thing is always larger than itself.
Look at it closely
a thing becomes the size of the world.
Poetry is that looking.

The common lies
like its opposite
in our eyes.

We have to change
the way we see.

Be me.

Ferns coming up from the dead leaves,
unfurl. Speaking
with these things we make them new.

3.

Your face on an ancient coin.

I give you a piece of paper
you stuff in your back pocket.
Not all money has numbers on it,
not all numbers count anything.

You were my sudden
daughter in this flood—
you knew what I know,

open the moment
with a quick wrist of word.

27 April 2011

= = = = =

Caught so many ways
a traffic in weather

a seeping from cloudscape to secular
priesthood scoffing at the ground

of course we love it, dirt,
it keeps us safe from falling

up forever placeless
into space, its opposite,

where even the blue itself
is gone, itself just darling dust.

28 April 2011

= = = = =

I saw an animal walking in grass today,
Thank God for thee! I cried
but he replied Thank me.

28 April 2011