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GROWING UP ITALIAN

1. The Godfather

His necessity is always waiting
grim compadre, *gumbaa*,
frowning at the font—

“Who is this infant
worth owning or belonging?
Even the clock
can tell a better story,
lewd drip of the clepsydra.
It was a woman brought
us both here, woman
of whom it is not right to speak,
girl around the corner, mother of God.”
2. *The Lesson*

A child is mostly about miracles—
laws kick in only later
when gravity happens
and the eagle that snatches you
from your cradle
soon has to let you fall.
3. Right Food

Or salt anchovies and gold sultanas
lank tresses of whole basil
onion'd through with oil
just enough to coat
each shank of the pasta
accurate secco  succulence
with no gaudy sauce
for the Americans, no red slop.

11 January 2013
Night. When the world
walks away from the window
and you’re alone
inside yourself.

The houses we build
are meant as outer signs
of an inward seclusion,
to be yourself inside.

11 January 2013
4. *The Catechism Lesson*

Where is Adam buried?
In my testicles.
And where is Eve?
Among your ovaries.

11 January 2013
5. *La Chiesa*

And the church walls
painted to look like marble
green snaky feints through travertine
o I knew the words already
so felt the sleek shock of fake.
But other colors were truthing me,
stations of the cross Christ Falls
A Second Time the organ played
while we filed up for communion
so many of us young and old to
kneel at the rail and elbow up again
while the organist carried on Mascagni
that famous intermezzo between
the lovers and the murder. And who
was Santa Fotunata anyhow?

12 January 2013
6. *La Festa*

Girls in eggshell satin blouses
boys in white longsleeve shirts
we smelled different too.
We were carrying a message
we didn’t understand
most of us would spend
our whole lives deciphering.

12 January 2013
Caught in blue ink
a snowdrift with
two deer in it
nuzzling down for corn.

12 January 2013
My eyes are going
the light while it lasts
belongs to me.

12.1.13
So little to say
this sick day

they call it that

nothing wrong with
the day though

except maybe the dark.

12.I.13
ON THE PUSZTA

Berlioz put his Faust to start with
on the endless Hungarian plain
because a man all alone on the grasslands
is the bravest challenge to the world.
Suppose it to be a devil. Suppose he has
a host of devils speaking their own
devilish language that looks like Basque.
And there the poor tenor stands
through his whole life, everything
that he does or happens at him is
no better than a dream. Still
he’s a hero. Aloneness his virtù,

12 January 2013
Footsteps in the attic
if only I could be sure
whose they are
who is walking
the road over my house.

12 January 2013
So much guesswork to be done.
Do you miss the flowers
when you’re indoors, do you
miss the Turkish carpet
when you’re walking on the lawn?
You are the one we’ve been looking for,
a priest itching to believe in some strange god.

12 January 2013
IRISH STUDIES

1.

Coming back to life
after a long day sick
ten hours sleep, sleep
the Irish penicillin.
For we are a dream people
and our strength is from
that somber landscape
shot through with such light,
our native country.
The woman in black
stood close beside me
she moved inside me,
a sudden healing
goddess from our nether world.

2.

Irish folk beware:
I learn these things
from dream and family
not from books.
Not from those pretending
out liud to be one of our kind.

3.

Ireland is January
Celts always at the extremes
the greenest meadows barrenest hills.
Erigal, mountain
where my mind’s at home.

13 January 2013
AD POETAM

Now ask yourself
who wants to hear
such music as you make?
Isn’t it all convention,
imposition? Are you
giving them pleasure
or sucking their blood?

13 January 2013
Tyranny of name—
the part of you
can be unscrewed
and some other
one screwed on
et tout va bien?

I wish it were so.
A name is part of your meat.

13 January 2013
Quiet excitement of beginning again—
but my handwriting looks the same,
so who am I fooling?

You, if I’m lucky,

and you’ll forgive me all the strange
roads brought me to you.

13 January 2013
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Breath not back yet.
Everything short.
Bach’s first English Suite seems just slow enough for me to climb aboard or at least count the freight cars as they pass.

13 January 2013