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When storms come
Saturn knows.
They are not his doing
but he makes use of them
secret workshops under earth
are his and savage seeds.

We try to listen to everybody
because the gods are near us
and speak through many mouths
and fiddle with many hands
this is their play
 even this
if you could only hear me hearing this.

2 January 2010

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Think about the word
as it slowly fills your mouth
to be spoken, a word
like 'fluent' rolls slow in your mouth.
falls forward, breathes
against your upper teeth,
speaks. This is the god.

2 January 2010

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Theophanies

two-a-penny
all we need are birds in the sky
and something to press my hand against
or even pick up and hold—

this
is something else.

This is what the world is for.

2 January 2010

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I have to approach things
in a better bitter way—
I'm nice most of the time
and what does it get me?
Long life and happiness.

But shouldn't I want something more,
a frown to show the gentle
caller at my door,
a barren fig tree in my yard?

2 January 2010

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Borrowed wine
in Metambesen stream
from rock clefts
by the old silver mines
it flows past knowing

I have washed my hands
in this wine many a time
each time less ignorant
till someday I might
know what water is.

2 January 2010

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She plays the organ in the church.
From her perch she can look down
and take her pick of all the hymning people
and think They all can hear me
but I am playing just for him.

2 January 2010

(This is not what art is, but what it's like.)

PETAL

of this flower
from somewhere

not a leaf and not a
bract and not a thorn

it is what the whole
thing means I think

a rose is the color of the Other.

2 January 2010

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Let it say this to the mirror:
Mother, you made me what I am.
I have no father unless the air is,
that shabby spendthrift heaven
that falls to earth and breathes us.
I am born from ignorance.
The ancients pictured ignorance
as a mirror held beside her hip
in Venus's hand—she never
looks into it herself, there
all fixity of seeming dwelleth
your mortal enemy the seeming self.

2 January 2010

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Green day, speak from the mirror
you can see right through the snow
and divest the seeming from your seeing

find your way through to the blue
flashlight somebody dropped down my well
you never mind getting wet go down

and fetch it for me I need that glow.

2 January 2010

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Half of something
that has a name
has none.

2.I.10

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Will the 24 is it ever take me again
to Chalcot Farm
where the tall girl from Nairobi
answers men according to their deserts?
Or will I walk up the Heath again
ambitious for a Prospect of the City?
Three thousand four hundred fifty six
miles from Kennedy to Heathrow
— and that's the easy part.

2 January 2010

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Getting somewhere else

or seem to—

imagine this,

 a coal mine in your cellar,

you listen to Slovak women on the radio

you worry about cathedrals a lot—

 can stones commit sin?

 does an apple have an eye?

Then quietly, even meekly,

go down the wooden steps

holding a kitchen match in front of you.

Mostly you see just the flame.

But there's something down there

waiting for you, since Cambrian times,

those leaves untree'd that now are anthracite—

a sweet pentameter but it leaves you in the dark.

2 January 2010

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how does a sacrament remember its shape

the question woke me still dark
not snowing yet I thought of sacraments
baptism the eucharist the anointing of the dying
thought of Gregory Dix's classic *The Shape of the Liturgy*
didn't I try to teach that in a course one
to give students a sense of an evolving canon of sensibility
of the shape of feeling

cast out over language, a shape
that language comes to fill
even if (or only if) the words are always different,

it's praise, always praise, of love or lover,
god or land or prowess,

and the whole history of poetry
is that,

a shape against forgetting, a long song
sometimes defiled by ego-authorship

but the shape!

prevails still!

the living sinuous shape of it, grasp and praise!

and didn't I hear Dix preach once

at St Mary the Virgin's in the 1950s,
no, I just heard about it, about him,
from friends who were there, and I thought
of the pastor, the Revd. Grieg Taber
who received me into his communion
he looked like Pio XII and preached
a pretty decent sermon too, austere
and intellectually elegant, but that's only me
remembering what only me was thinking
when I sat in all that incense-torpid beauty
listening to just a man,

and how much
of what I remember
is my own memory anyway,

memory
hath no authorship,
memory wipes out attribution, no matter
who happened it,
it happened
and that's what counts,
what in memory is stored,

as the great canon of so-
called 'primitive' poetry

(though all poetry is primitive, starts
from nowhere, struggle to rise

from the blurred perception
into a sometimes lucid word
with music)

or 'oral poetics'

(though all poetry comes from the mouth,
is shaped by the wet meat of our meanings
before the desiccated page consumes it)

knows nothing
of authorship,
we are voices,
a choir in a cloud

singing each one
to a different god
girl goal telos
of history

who is God.

I remember things
and that is where the truth is

not what happened
but what is remembered.

How does anything remember its shape?
And who am I to remember?

3 January 2010

= = = = =

Breathe on these bones
and into this one blow
till you hear a sound
like ocean answering.
Then you will know.

3 January 2010

PORTOLAN

Asking for port
the ship interviews the waves.
Everybody has something to say:
Go my way, my way
saves you from uncertainty.

I lift you towards
what you think you want,
where all your lines converge
on the other side of eternity.
No, this! But there is no this.

3 January 2010

= = = = =

Dawn is happening
but all it seems
is things already there
get easier to see.

Nobody is coming
over the hill no beast
pads over the snow
might as well be dark

still for all I know.
Sometimes flags
twitching make me think
someone's moving

only the wind
a lot of him
worrying the trees
pushing the house walls

again so many years.

3 January 2010

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Enough light to count money
numbers on pieces of paper
soldiers huddled against evil wind
days of big wind
flags going crazy
a country turning inside out.

3 January 2010

= = = = =

Crossed hairs in gunsights
saltire of Scotland
summer spider web ragged in the wind—
being in the world
means something stares back at you.

3 January 2010