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That things are or get lost
in the temple

 `is the temple.

The woman one night by the candles
tall girl in white in the Delacroix chapel
kept switching the minuterie on again
so she could study the saints, lost
in shadows the limbs of a man the face
of a woman. I say it again,
whatever is lost is the temple.

So every color is a god
in it or of it, a shrine
lifted, to that woman who
fed half-francs to the clanking coinbox
and lit her tapers – what is she saying
by praying?

 That too is lost.

Only what is gone from me is yours,
your tears, your temple, weight
of your body on the kneeler,

 your unknown god.

Where does the prayer or anything go?

21 January 2009

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Lest one, late,
let another in
and then the gate
congested turn
into mad dancing.
Priests on a hill
at night trying
to rule the sky.

21 January 2009

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Most rumors you hear
are true.
Except about me.

(woke with that in mind)

22 I 09

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Merchandise of my morning doubt
how can a sonnet not
be like a serpent?
A symmetry with teeth,
a thing folded in upon itself
to spring forward, a swift idea,
the fang of mind sticks in
and leaves the alien protein
of a human thought to rage
among our blank perceivings.
How could music even
be worse than this? I said as much
to Karl Kraus one fat night—
he pooh-poohed me, patting
the rough stone pillars of the opera house—
“Music masters silence, poems
lose themselves forever in it.”

22 January 2009

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Lies all lies.

Just squirrels on the snow.

22.I.09

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But no – you *remember* music, I said,
but the poem keeps *saying itself* inside your head
if it's lucky and you're not – the words
are common, as no music could ever be,
the words once heard belong to you, not
themselves, and certainly not to the long
forgotten girl who wrote them yesterday.
You remember your fingers taking it out
of the envelope, even, but the words
once read are part of your house now.
Music's always trying to make an air
but these words are what you actually breathe.

22 January 2009

LICENSE

Barely blue, the Janissary sky
Broods over Round Top, eroded peneplane
Love left behind when it wore the mountains down

Down here with us, the desirers, lost
Under Overlook, lost in names,

Caught up in a dream of saying things
You maybe want to hear. Your dear
Soft demonstrations bring me round.

Coma breaks, we wake out of knowing,
Legal ecstasies of sheer wakefulness
Nuzzling the such of things, the fur of sense

Dazzles. We've waited ten thousand years
Yesterday till now. Noon. Wake this.
Touch this day and all the rest come too.

22 January 2009

[Composed using for the first letters of the lines all the letters I could read on the license plates of cars parked in front of me in the Wal-Mart parking lot in Kingston NY. There were fourteen letters, hence the sonnet form.]

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Of course I'm literal
or it is.

Sometimes things just do look like other things.
Or knock on some door in the mind
where the shapes and textures of things are stored.
And colors live.

The door opens and I look out—
in the drawing I see what looks like a burning tower.
But it also looks like a shoe on fire.
I'm suspicious of things that look like other things—
but it's too late now, always already too late
because once you see anything
the narrative has already begun.

We do not know how to unsee.
Or is that what art really is, how to unsee the things we see,
we think we see?

Already flames pour out of the tower,
children through books out the window
to save them, even though it's raining
and the words get very wet
as they fall on the people standing around
the base of the tower, some grieving,

some cheering the fire on.

Inside the tower wise men hurry down winding stairs

thinking about death. Every one is safe:

a tower only burns itself.

Now from the smoke and flame and glow

the tower begins to talk.

All a tower is, is talk, talking big,

answering back to the sky.

Women dancing around the fire

have danced right out of their high heel shoes.

One of them is on fire and the flames rise slow

to lick where her ankle would have been

empty bone, bone of air

but she is gone, escaped from any fire,

escaped from all these answers,

instruments, vestments. She has left

everything behind but dance—

the dance looks like the empty

left side of the picture all light and air,

everything the dance leaves

behind when it too has leapt

wildly and gone.

22 January 2009

THINGS

Things wait for us
like the sun in the sky.
Their own schedule,
their orderly sequence
is *desire*. Rust
love us, the pale
scribble of sap
leaking down the pine
bark is a love letter.
To us. Read it.
Read what the mind says.

We invented things
because we were lonely.
Things talk to us
whenever we listen.

Things were the first words
in our new language—
an earthquake
is a typographical error
where thousands die.

Tragedy. Revolt
of the language
we once composed
to give us bliss.

But things are long and everywhere
and mistakes are few.
I may have said all this before
but they did too.

23 January 2009

DARK RECOVERY

Said an old man to a young man
I know from experience how to be you,
you don't know how to be me
and I have paid dear for this advantage.

23 January 2009

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Man—

a little cap

upon the shaft of mind.

23.I.09

[dreamt]

= = = = =

I don't live here anymore
but here I am

 something
about the river, this very one,
and the frozen-stiff lagoon
and the snow everywhere
but the roads clear

and & but
make us up

the rest of it is weather.
Where do I live

said the whetstone to the knife.
Where is anywhere but here.

23 January 2009

after a walk to Blithewood, glorying in the sight of the same river, pace Heraclitus, I have been watching for years – it isn't about numbers – it is isn't even about 'same' – it's the sight spreading out – where what is there turns into what is seen

= = = = =

To trust my instincts

means to trust the world—

trust that all the years and deeds and passions and sufferings and smallest influences

have shaped me to some purpose

which I can best fulfill by saying what comes into my head,
respecting my reactions to people and places and things

trusting that I have been made and made correctly

to do the thing that this current instinct leads me to undertake. Dare. Do.

It seems a proud and egotistical thing,

trusting oneself to be right

but it is in fact humble, obedient, responsive,

answering moment by moment the questions the world chooses to ask me
by using the instincts and aversions and terrors the same world shaped me
with.

23 January 2009

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It is the Ifrits who do this
to us, not alefbet not elefant
not peel not feel
it is the if of them the Ifrits
the zionists of hamas
the stern gang of the crescent moon
the Ifs, the Ifs who look
across every river and say
if that were mine and it is

save us from thugs Thuggee and all the thusses of filosofy

instead: philophily.

23 January 2009

(answering Stein's scholion to Bialy's Parsifal)

[from an old piece of paper]

It's time for a new alphabet again
and this time let's get it right.

It is right already
we just don't know it,

the Angels of the Nationalities,
the Ethnarchs, they have made

every alphabet, and each is meant
not so much to write the sound

but to encode the subtle differences,
the way it looks to be us,

the way what we speak shows
our true faces when we write it down.

But I am a new person today,
don't I need new ABCs?

13 July 1998
Naroling

23 January 2009

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Where he sinned,
there he suffered—

I was brought up believing this rule
and anything you believe for the first ten years
always believes itself inside you
forever after no matter what.

Stalin had his priest say mass daily in the Kremlin.

Because everything only borders
on Switzerland, the rational, the good.

At night we sleep in Austrian valleys
dark with sin and desperation.

There is where our acts are born,
our terrible annunciations.

24 January 2009

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Having opinions about everything
is not the same as having
something to say about anything.

24.I.09

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We are commas
in something else
being said
by someone
we will never know.

24 January 2009