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WE LIVE BY EAR

Establishment nearby listening.

Problem. You Australia,

I Portugal. Weather of not.

So the Mother of the Few decided

and the Great Dome splayed

over all. Wisdom, or just river?

Where were the children of it

and waiting for what? Words

they were saying, tunes

they were toning, but which?

Tune's the most important thing

like an apple or like wheat.

Then the spear who called himself

their *father* responded from the barrel

where the rain collected from the roof

his voice was like a rat in the wall

gnawing inwards to escape the light

and when he paused to breathe

his rasp sounded like information
sleeping lost in the computer,
what can work do to help anybody

all it does is grab your elbow
and try to make you waste your time
doing its idea of doing. Yes, you:

I know it's impolite to implicate
the reader in the mess of this transaction
but here you are, cellphone in your hand,

your private ringtone I know how to whistle
so that with God's mother's help
you'll always get around to answering.

13 February 2006

=====

You can't trust flowers not to fade
and you can't trust rock to wither.
But there are qualities, qualities.
Tell me what you see in the sky
and I'll tell you what I do in the dark.

13 February 2006

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But I heard it.

It called itself music

and lived in a little house

at the end of the road.

Never saw smoke in the chimney

but it was always warm inside

the few times she let me in.

13 February 2006

=====

The way things *catch*
or fall. The door
hidden in the air,

I hear its hinges sometimes
or the quiet snick
when the bolt slips out of the strike

and I know someone has come in
or just for a few minutes
leaves the door open so I can hear

or they can listen in
on what if anything is
going on down here.

13 February 2006

CROSS-DRESSING

I often dress as a man
trying to know what it feels like
to be one. I still don't know.

13 II 06

CROSS-FRESSING

Eating all the foods
you don't like
and liking it.

13 II 06

A Valentine for Charlotte

Not the old stuff.

The diamond is still stuck in the sky,
the rose
still is living with its mother and
they don't work anymore anyhow.

Something new is needed,
new
because you are, like everything you do.

Sometimes I despair of saying anything new
and then I say *you*
and think of you—
how strange it is
we've lived together fifteen years
longer than I've ever done
anything with anybody
and it still feels to me that we just got married—

that is so strange, so America-over-the-horizon, fresh
as a canyon cut in the old earth
as if the rock itself around us were busy explaining
it takes a very long time to be new,

maybe we can make new love,
new politics and new language,

maybe like the diamond after all,
that old thing
waiting for us to be just as new.

14 February 2006

ANTIETAM

know-nothing

the blood is in the light

as once at Gettysburg

I saw my grandmother's tears

in the fugitive face of dew —

April's last snow.

14 February 2006, Rhinebeck

=====

Buy everything.

Forget nothing.

14 II 06

THE PROPOSITIONAL

Money talks.

That if nothing else

should teach us

how terrible

it is to make sense.

=====

A book

like a candle

reads itself away.

14 II 06

=====

At the slur of beginning yammer

or skill, no man but bites his own skull first.

Tooth by tooth maybe, or salt or candle flame or capriole

of his sad dust into the sustaining air.

14 II 06

=====

Things remembering things

leave the who out of it –

the muffin-man maybe, we walked his beat

north and met the west wind

the flies forgot,

times of a story

only children remember,

broken pieces of a china plate

face of the queen on it

now so many faces.

15 February 2006

=====

Things dry out
to capture the light

zebra stripes

Venetian blinds

the world caged
on the bathroom floor

=====

We wander lost down the corridor
and all we need is a simple mirror
but all the mirrors in this terrible
house are trick, they show
only the way you used to look.

15 February 2006

Dérive

Walk north of north

and let the ley line

drive your feet

forget about it

and keep walking:

that is the rule

past the dragon and the curious well,

the closed-eyed woman at the open door

the glimpse of China you catch through a window

stretching out into weird violet distances

rivers of ink and you know

that no one is waiting for you there either

and the herds of cattle are on the move,

pause here and have a bite to eat

where the sun stops, at the corner

leave the story to take care of itself
and go on into the distances,
drift into the privacy of what never happened.

15 February 2006

=====

It's not always easy to break a plate
and sometimes the light inside it makes a glass tough—
we live on a planet where not even loss is dependable,
asking one person after another what time it is
until the day is done.

=====

the woman with the fur collar on her coat
walks along past me leaving me to suppose

the white fur is a man's arm on her shoulders
but there is no man and the fur is fake

thank goodness and no one at all has died
or been hurt to bring you this information.

15 February 2006

=====

He asks you: have you found a cart,

a decent chariot, a polar bear,

a supermarket, a broken pipe

in the shape called Uncle Paul?

Have you climbed the 6,011 limestone steps

up to the basilica of Sainte Madeleine?

From the top of her bell tower you can see

peasants working in a field of what

to our eyes looks like wheat

on a planet invisible from any other place.

Some men and women climb

every day of their lives to the top of the tower

to be sure they'll be there when the harvest comes

to learn at last the nature of that far grain.

15 February 2006

=====

Over the plains of Central Asia
see suns rising one after another
coats on a coat rack coats
made of fire and for sale
who will buy my blazing coat
says the sky, *who will fill*
my burning sweaters
with the exciting movie
of our conversation?

Dancers

balance at the barre
on no toes, gravity
is all we have in common, honey,
the moon's a lap dance on the winter earth—
everything is lyric here, queer, lambda
to omega, come in please,
when you come to the end of your body
you have reached the end of the world.

15 February 2006