A GENESIS

Things fly here
and code us

later we decode
and are.

It is simple
when you think it

you and me
adding up

I borrow you
‘for eternity’

you are a book
I live by

the flame
I read it by

we function
the lovely machine

always answers
the sky

it fell from
the plane

landing
catches up
with its shadow
existence

no different
we belong to it

at last
no word

changes a thing
breathing in

is change enough.

21 January 2003
THE ORGANIST

takes his church with him
he hoists the steeple
on his back
and staggers through the town
and plays

he wont let us
alone with his music

I have seen this many times
in Switzerland, by some lake,
the people listening, entering
into small boats, a bronze
statue overlooks the shore.
Of a saint, frowning.

21 January 2003
2 Pluviose CCXI
(responding to Fiona's poem)

o god don't do this to me
don't show me a kid with his books
it's me sixty years ago isn't it, it's me
hauling an orange crate upstairs
to stand them up in books, upright
on the shelves, real books,
thin as they were or one of them even
a book of poems I could make nothing of
why would anyone write the truth in lines?

21 January 2003
THE LAST

or the mold
or the foot itself
wrong wrong

the mile should not be so long
the hand not so far away from the hand

People think: he’s chasing a $10 bill
blown along by the wind
but this kind of money you catch
by sitting at home with your eyes closed

maybe from time to time your nostrils flare
as if you were a lion

and you smelled far off, everything is far, about far,
the blood of something that concerned you,
golden eyes, and you think about that a long time.

21 January 2003
midnight oranges
allowed to talk
about anything
even what only
happens to be

isn’t it?
speech is the only
permission
if you can focus
you can say it

if you say it
it is happening
already
in the animal mind
you are

midnight oranges
let us
spill little words
over each other
trust me

I am no one.

22 January 2003
FINDING THE SMALL

Finding the small
is not easy

It must be followed
like a fox through wheat fields

quick as a color
take hold

It is the only thing
worth your touch.

22 January 2003
Let the peremptory ego speak:
know me, I am the size
of your desire plus the church on fire
and young monks running
over the snow without stopping their chant

plus the river sleeps
where the longboat stops at midnight
someone climbs
up the water steps dripping wet
and that is the word

I have been trying to tell you
all my life
listen to it while you can make it yours
because the only
thing other than your word is me.

22 January 2003
PLANTING WINTER

But I heard your piano
it was a guitar
I didn’t understand
a sound
so much to tell

the oranges of Avignon
we shared last night
I have a confession
I’ve been thinking of you again
when I was a Pope in that city
didn’t you know
the aggressions of poetry against the intellect
a rabbit caught in the machine

2.

you, you.

You, Inc.
You whose secret thousand instances
have bamboozled my nights for fifty years,
you. And I was the Pope in Avignon
another life
I ate your oranges
every one
and licked my fingers.

3.

They don’t have the music I like
so I put up with yours,
faded billboard of the heart
swaying in a highway breeze
Oklahoma midnight summer
I smell the green from which we're made.

4,
It's cold even for a child
to be beautiful the way a smile
knows all too well how to be
I am an animal of rapture
a rolling ball a subway car.
Give me directions to your insides.
To linger there. Like a loved
book by the bedside, slipped
under the bedstead, maybe
covered with dust. But your dust.

22 January 2003
Rhinebeck
HOW NOT TO TAKE WEATHER PERSONALLY

This is the main thing.
Otherwise the freeze comes inside
or you have tornado in the heart.

Insanity gives birth to a sad world.
Do not be the one it happens to.
Watch weather from the side.

22 January 2003
Rhinebeck
Elegant eland

as if I dreamed one
but it's too cold to dream

too hot under the covers

we are weather after all
and what does it mean
to have words in your mouth
and no one to say them too?

it's reading a book in the dark.

23 January 2003
A

other answer.
I have been 
all the people you can name 
and can prove it —
here is Stravinsky’s acidulous blood
in the passionate hallways of my arteries
couloirs, miroirs,
here is Greta Garbo’s wrist
softly fitted round my bones
and here is Frankenstein
himself doubting his savoir-faire.
I am your sciences,
all their formulas stuffed in my mouth.

23 January 2003
belief bird,
that’s me.
You can’t name a deity
I don’t believe in.
even Rat-Tusk the imaginary
squirrel up the cosmic tree
gets his meed of praise from me
and bellicole Athena with her elegant spear
probing the unconsciousness of us
tongue tip by satin slip,
and the big rock out on my hill
that someone on in 1912
Vote for Wilson and I still do.

23 January 2003
Catholic cantharides

everything turns me on.
Especially the emptiness of streets,
churches, warehouses, railway stations
like 30th Street in Philadelphia
a town that relies heavily on moon.
Axes of energy, pronouns
hard to identify, shehe, sheshe,
mewho, you? An angel nobody sees
idles over the city all day long
like a crippled jet circling to land.
Stacking pattern: air forgives air.
Barely legal Thai masseuses
run Visa cards through small devices.
I never go inside
I am a piece of paper blown along the street
with your handwriting on it
scudding so fast I can’t read what I say.
Gutter language is an angel’s mouth
or just some man worried about his friends.

23 January 2003
Demon dapper

I saunter for a change
dressed like a parson on his golf day
offering flames for other people's cigarettes.

I don't play. I'm like the kangaroos
you see pictures of on Sydney greens
taking mild interest in all that seems.
But only seems. All my new clothes
mean to impress you, look how trim
I look in this austere anorak.
The world is just a hallway
where we can't see the walls.
But I see them. I am me,
ambassador from Tartary,
crow on a snowbank, waiting.
And probably for you.

23 January 2003
olgotha gone.

Of course I saw God die and come back to life again. It happens all the time between one breath and the next. There's nothing new in the world but your next breath. I sneak up close to you to get the warmth of it on my cheek, I hear your breath in my ear a word you don't know you're saying thrills me, we both know you mean it, it's the things we don't intend that mean most, a theory about that is called Theology, or why God died and left you to take his place while the world slept and only you were waking. And me coming back to life as if my whole body were just a distant frontier of your skin.

23 January 2003
ouch truth

it’s all that’s left.
I get so solemn sometimes
dissolve me in sour cream
like horseradish, these are native
birds staring at us from the trees
like words we can’t pronounce,
this naked footprint on my thigh.
Be sandy with me and put up
with the nervous repetitions of the sea
never sure we get the point
the waves have been promoting all these years.
Like missionaries developing a taste for native meat.
Here is my philosophy in a nutshell:
I am a bird on your windowsill
I study you whenever the sun lets me come down.
What’s left for us? The truth, my friend,
the other side of the sky.

23 January 2003
Harpies harry
us, no, Mongols
on the warpath
a house made of arrows
so cold this winter
nothing carries
and the air falls.
Ten days below ice
and Doubt is busy
that old Working Man
takes everything personally
which is the actual link
between poetry and insanity:
the hazards of her calling
call to her in the city night,
why always alone and never alone?
It seems there is a metal in the world
that rusts into unhappiness
ours, no matter what we do or try to.
When things go wrong I turn into someone else
since the one I am can’t bear contradiction
adversity and other boring movies
that still keep us glued to our seats.
As if there were anywhere outside the theater
even if they turned the damned projector off.

23 January 2003
is still reading me.
It is so strange to be with the young,
they never seem to figure it out
that I am them too, I walked
down all their streets, and everything
they feel now I felt
and still can feel. Since every
is something stored inside,
and everything I ever was I am.

What an insult the old are to the young,
having all the young have plus everything else
that happened since. How intolerable
the old are, I thought so once
and think so still, since no one
ever grows old inside, certainly there is no time
inside the body, no time in life
to change the huge luminosity
of being into something less or feeble.
It stays what it ever was, sometimes it grows
until death borrows it away for purposes of its own.
And what does death do with all that light?

23 January 2003
Fill the world with poetry.
What else do I have to do?