

12-2003

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## WINTER SKIN

an itch against  
comfort the importance

the preacher casting  
doubt any desires

because words can fit  
more or less in anybody's mouth

this is long narrative  
beginning with the coconut

arrival how one island  
intercoursed another

rage of rape in silent witness  
despoiled by pleasure

seafoam did it  
angry at the orchestra

that tuned such tumult  
I'm a believer a believer

in the whole opera the cloaca  
where feelings flush themselves

genetic mutations  
overwhelming Polynesia

things hurt me too.

10 December 2003

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all the times the oracle was wrong  
we'll remember only when the omen  
was accurate, the Death card  
came to my fingers just in time,

we accept so many omens, so few  
omens accept us. It is not easy  
to bear a fate, or make it speak.  
All those cards and not one mine.

10 December 2003

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so scrape by these the nightfall fallow  
with the cloud break past our furthest window  
speaking foreign moonlight in the trees  
all those German masters scared of spiders  
all those fires they folded in their wallets  
and clutched in their bad rooms so long  
until their children smelled of singeing  
philosophers and scholiasts and sad  
atheistical physicians in love with your mother  
and it is not a matter of inside the house  
or around the garden it can be anywhere  
the way the light decides people can be nothing  
till they break out of the fractured book  
and spill each other's secrets in the grass.

11 December 2003

## SINTFLUT

I keep coming to the Flood.  
These marks mean men  
and then they were gone.

The signs of earlier sympathy  
bewilder me.

We were always here,  
always at this same work  
I stuff the crannies with today,

*the mosaic the size of the sky*  
it is our ancient task to build.

And we had to find  
some place bigger than the sky to put it  
so language came to our hands,  
that firmament at right angles to everything else,

all the other arts help us on the way  
cheer or sustain us  
but this terrible saying business  
is what it has to be, only it can fill  
the pattern till it's done

and then we'll know what the picture means  
when the last word has been said.

11 December 2003

## **THYMODYNAMIC**

bring to life again  
the broken stick  
in whose dry heart  
you found his name

green as could be  
green as answers  
green as rain.

11 December 2003

## READING HEART

Reading heart the Sanhedrin  
discovers nine lost scrolls  
*ketuvim* only, not the law,  
not the prophets, just kings  
we forgot, queen too  
whose pale entitlements  
forgot us, we looked upon them  
and divided our vineyards  
we smote the thigh, we gave  
what we had no right to give

o nine old histories  
of lost moons, wasted eclipses,  
red-faced invaders  
with white eyebrows,  
plagues, famines  
that left us fat, names  
that come to us again  
bleeding with gods.

Nine mountains  
that no longer are.  
Everything changes.  
If we lose our story  
how can we be  
the ones it made?  
Does the night  
have a history

different from its day?  
Sunlight all round me  
a little fountain tumbling  
three huge scarlet  
blossoms of the amaryllis,  
does all this have  
to come from somewhere?

12 December 2003

## LANDSKIP

There are so many of them  
and the last valley still has room  
rushes from the glaciers

this morning the world began  
without us, the landscape  
all by itself  
unmarked by attention  
borderless and infinite

When was the first landscape painted, pure landscape, from which all the human presence had been banished except the gaze itself? The will to see, to see, select a part out of the whole visual field? No sages tottering small in ferny mountains, no saints rushing to meet other saints against the golden hills. Just mountains and rivers and trees and lakes and grassland. When was the first landscape understood as something seen, framed, taken home — a fragment meant to be a whole? All the arts of fragmentation arise from landscape painting

we can never catch up with what is  
and so we commoditize  
for eyes  
a pane of this spherical unendingness  
inside which we live  
by grace of light

and the little man walks off the seen.

13 December 2003

## **EXILE**

Inspector Woodgrain  
interrogates the sunless  
morning light, the best  
analysis is passivity,  
let the language in each  
suspect flow at ease  
along the given. Reagent  
and reaction, nothing  
needs to be discussed.

The evidence writes itself  
in sinless dreams  
across the counterpane.

Wake hot, the pillow  
some boiled thing  
that found you, a book  
you read in childhood  
that still keeps going  
inside you, chapter after  
chapter forever.

There is no end to a book.

Air is elsewhere.

Fugue. Inspector  
Displeasure uses light  
like stone, like snow  
like the rustic masonry  
outside the Opera House.

Police everywhere.

You are on the boulevard

of no u-turns,  
the border is ahead of you  
where another language  
happens only an hour  
away. What will you do?  
What will you understand  
then, when words  
mean nothing?  
It is strange to be  
so close to elsewhere.  
These strange looking  
cars are coming from there,  
brown dust on cracked  
windshields, headlights  
missing, long line of them  
patiently in twilight  
under the bare chestnut trees.  
Why are you going  
where they come from,  
do you want that dust  
you can taste already,  
the dog on the front seat?  
Why is everybody crying?

14 December 2003

## CHASM

That a goat  
can be a bridge  
not even bronze  
or slatted footpath  
strung on cords  
over your ravine,  
we know the ruin  
a false step takes  
blue shadows  
in the white  
cow's ears  
we never ask  
what they listen to  
all I can taste  
is weather.

14 December 2003

## SECULAR WAKING

make me an offer  
there is a dictionary  
tells us this  
an aviator soars over it  
counting cows in South Tyrol  
I know how to do it  
divide by churches  
the chapel we made out in  
because there's nobody  
ever there but wind  
and there you were  
at the end of anything  
once there were little pleasures  
before the orthodoxy  
of desire turned rational,  
little pleasures, little pleasures  
the lakes show up as color  
only, and in them certain  
flowers grow unstifled  
by all that blue hydrogen,  
yellow often or orange even  
or sumptuous Viennese gamboges  
when all this also  
belonged to you,  
the thing coming towards you now  
is a mountain, granite wing  
snow on it all year long,

you soar among particulars  
unresolved, soon  
you find the little landing strip  
among the meek alpages  
and how quiet it is there  
among the six-horned goats,  
I'm trying to explain *alone*  
that glorious subtrahend  
in which you live like a king  
like the sun in the sky  
strewn like it now  
all over the grass, relaxed,  
staring up at where you've been.

15 December 2003

## THE EVIDENT

as much as it must have struggled  
against the common light  
it could still be seen, even I  
could see it, thick as a January river  
blue as shadows on the snow

but still I had no name for it, no way  
to indicate exactly the way  
the rooftiles folded over one another  
curve fitted in curve and still a little  
light shows through,

the roof covers the nave, the nave  
shapes a place on the ground, the sky  
fits the whole thing inside itself

what do I have to do with roofs  
a roof is an animal who tears my house apart  
and falls asleep on the ruins of my space

16 December 2003

## MORNING AS HISTORY

Mound was mountain  
made of light.  
A forgiveness born  
before its crime

they understood light itself  
as a transgression  
the hood of crime  
glaring over the world

no one is safe  
when everyone is touched,  
that was my morning religion,  
my Persian puberty

we have to ally ourselves  
with whatever rises and pervades  
we have to be on the side  
of whatever touches us

to be allies of our own feelings  
and the great gate blaxes  
open now beyond the tree  
as if we were finally home.

16 December 2003

## IN THE TYROL

Saint Francis  
in the snow, the wolf  
stands by him  
listening. Listening  
is finally what we do  
when he is there,  
we animals,  
a man so quiet  
there is something to hear.

What do it know  
of his country?  
Only two weeks worth  
of that light,  
that narrow hurry,  
I had to read  
the papers fast  
to get behind the news,

the old man  
in his drugstore  
in Lana, among  
modern cosmetics  
he had been there  
forever, his face  
healthy, grey,

Camonica, Etruria,  
and something older,  
Europe before language  
before the descent  
of man into speech.  
I bought a nail brush  
because we still have hands.

17 December 2003

## **The opportunities**

a day later

like a slogan

from a dead campaign

I walked in clouds

I built a house in minutes

everything literal

is a lie

every line

points the wrong way

all the wrong ways.

Everything you need

is perpendicular

to your actual path,

nothing is permitted.

Everything is there.

18 December 2003

## **GENDER**

roses sorted by shade  
how well they mingle  
the mauve the pink

genders of each other  
like the Egyptians on their walls  
white women red men.

18 December 2003