CEPPO

log left in trees:
why don’t they bury us
where we fall
so we lie where we live

Treatise
against cemeteries

let the dead
stay among us
whispering palpably
sharing the confusions of their state

their chemical destinies.

What would it be if Amy Goldin talked in me?
Would it be different from my usual palaver?

everything we know how to say
came our way from the ones before us

the ancient bodies whose wounds we are.

Everything is all we know at any minute
is a said word, an overheard mistake.

Fill the pen fast
the world is full of news.

16 August 2002
THE UNIVERSAL FUNCTION

I thought it was Mahler
but it was sleep

the way you can’t stop
talking about the weather

when you get down to it
that’s all there is.

17 August 2002
TOONS

I don’t want to live in a cartoon.
And that’s why dogs make me uneasy
even when they don’t scare me to death.
A dog is a toon, half flesh and half
a wicked fancy of entitlement.

17 August 2002
MAHLER’S SIXTH SYMPHONY

I don’t want to live in an abstraction any more. Any more than you do. I want the scum of my actual life frictional and thick. I will walk on glass and sleep in shingle. Romance again, intricate night music, horseradish in whipped cream, I send you home for breakfast. We risk so much for one another. That is what music means.

17 August 2002
MENSCHENHERZ

you have to come with me.

There is a silence you have to light up
with your easy gossip, loving and interpreting
all the customers in my café. The smoke
of barely legal cigarettes hangs across the air
and people are afraid to listen to their own
conversations. Hard to be with one’s own kind.
Help me. Make them talk to one another,
make them settle their hips and elbows
comfortably to for endless palavering.
But nobody is looking, talking, feeling.
Menschenherz, I have a box of seashells,
I breathe softly in them, hold them to my ears,
the words I hear are the words I spoke,
how can I live with that kind of news?
Make them talk again in my stunned café.

17 August 2002
AN ARIA FROM *FAUST*

The sexiest move is interpretation.
No one can resist that sly penetration.
You say more than you know
and know more than there is.

Desire is a penknife and a loupe
a little piece of silk thread and a pin
and an old pencil for me to write down
measurements I’d do better to forget

but this is all I have, this dull
song of understanding you.
It bores and bothers you, but at the end
you belong to everything I said.

17 August 2002
LOSING

It is a dignity, a loss
at least, and people always
look serious at that.

A bear day downtown,
parcel left in the taxi
you talk too much

to random people
you lose things all the time
the token rolls on the tracks

but not tragedy, not yet.

17 August 2002
THE HAP OF BIRTHDAY

Whose birthday?
Without you
what would I be?
A family of questions
who died before the answer,

that ruined temple
you see the sunset through,

broken columns, a door
open on nowhere,

which one of us
got born today?

There is a country
where one day every year
no one gets born.
And that day is called
Everybody’s Birthday.
Gifts are exchanged,
promises made, love slaps
tendered, drunkenness
endured.

But here
we have to shout to overhear
how wonderful you
happen to the day.

17 August 2002
haunted by the delicate dissonance
between Doughty's Victorian verse
and the slip of Xeroxed pages
through my fingers. What time is it,
time of meter, time of tech,
the fall of language keeps me reading,
elbows on the table, each page
as if a letter from someone
I never knew but here it is. Reading
is being a child on the prowl
for all I'll ever need
and some of it is here
in the short breaths built
up in endless lines, this old asthmatic god
reciting the world, commas
strewn through like September leaves.

17 August 2002
NIGHT STORIES

1.
How little we really knew about him when he came. Breath to do something bigger he seemed to have. But where’ was his heart, hard to say. So some never trusted. Worry about where he came from, or what he thought on the pillow at night, that’s what you really need to know about a man. We knew nothing about his dreams.

2.
Everybody has a dream world of their own usually it’s ok to leave people alone in theirs. But some people, he was one, seemed to have too much breath just for ordinary talk. His stories might be really dangerous to us if we didn’t know, and we didn’t. You know what I mean, most people, it doesn’t matter what they’re thinking, they’ll never do it. But some people, you see, so what we really need to know is what people think about when they’re really alone, and tired, and in the dark, just on the brink of sleep or waking a little and walking barefoot down the hall, the staircase in the dark.

18 August 2002
Clarity breaks.
Spirit is a thing
also, waits
for matter
at a mountain pass

but will we gather
in time
for that meeting

and what will we
have to do
with matter?

Won’t the mountain
be enough
without me?

I was afraid to ask you
as I passed by
but you left your face
written in my mind
I look at you still

the ground rises
towards a terrible
simplicity
I look into your eyes.

18 August 2002
I woke up before the day was ready
people were on their way to get
churches ready for other people
a scorcher it will be today a look
of fever in the trees am I the one
you thought I dreamed last night
there is something else wanting to be me.
GNOMIKA

To know the future doesn’t mean to say it.
To say the future doesn’t mean to know it.
To say nothing of what’s to come
doesn’t keep it away though

a word is a dog that keeps the thing at bay.

To specify tomorrow might close a certain door.
There are rules, alas there are rules.

Things depend,
like a heavy amber chain around your neck.

The mind is perpendicular.

18 August 2002
A PRAYER TO THE GUARDIAN ANGEL

I want to know the words I never use.  
Tell me some words I never say  
so I can know the things I do not know  
the cities I forget to visit.  Index me.  
Let me visit the wells of my neglect.  
And then explain what I really mean  
by the words I keep saying all the time.

18 August 2002
to offer and be the one who offers
to call a divinity
to write
signs, runes
to repent
to be the one who is supposed to repent
repent means think again
or think it through
hard or stand in awe
of what one has done or not done
to be afraid
of one who is afraid
to protect
protect fear
fear is the feeling that holds upright
protect fear from being swept away
bright things, by bright things
to shine or to give light
a word
fire in a chalice
make a grave mound
heal a mountain
healthy evil
wise shame

to turn religion towards us
to make a positive
contract with what seems
instead of repent give something to someone
instead of fear help someone make something
instead of a mountain walk over to a stranger and make him or her happy
anybody can do the least of these

a new prophet there is no word
for prophet in this language

a language is a religion

the language people speak is what they really believe

isn’t it.

18 August 2002
Sometimes I think everything I have ever written was written with you in mind, the grace of you reading me, the grace of you taking it all in, understanding it, using it, and going beyond.

I certainly would not be the first one who thought: one writes to get beyond oneself. One writes to say what one doesn’t know. I write what I don’t know, so you will know it. I write what is the case with me, the words that flee like foxes and hares from the forest fire of my feelings, so that you in safety may know what set the brand among my branches.

If you know it, then it is known. If it is known, then I am remembered inside your breath. We can’t live by our own breath alone, only in the breath of another.

19 August 2002
Gamblers know a lot about the soul.
The underwear part, the never shower while you’re lucky part, the words you’re not supposed to say. Don’t let that evil image cross your mind.
The soul is made of stuff like that.
I wonder what the priests make of this soul, the one that loves bright colors and the smell of yesterday when you won big and everything was good.
There must be priests who gamble.
There must be a soul like that in me because just now I picked a sprig of windblown leaves all withered off my table and tossed it god knows where, and immediately I knew I had done wrong, scorned a sign, an emissary from the holy everything that of all the world picked me to visit and I have failed the encounter one more time. What have I done and what will Luck do with me, that quick impatient friend? Won’t I ever learn? Will she leave before the music stops? And will I have the nerve to follow wherever she goes?
QUESTIONNAIRE

How close do I have to be to far

to be a farmer?

Or given

all the cabbages, is this tree,

hemlock, fruitless, dark

nearer to me than a mother.

are you?

I want you so much

and there’s no border to my wanting

only the terrible

borders of me.

We live

in each other's silky pockets,

we give up oil for Lent

when we are Greeks but all night

we are Jews along our pillows

won’t you?

Doesn’t it want me

in you too? Aren’t all

our differences the same?

19 August 2002
SACRAMENT

Compose yourself darling
the night’s asleep
and any touch
might be your mother,

I have a little silver plate that says
be made the fruit be made the vine
at tipsy midnight drink the words with me

19 August 2002
what’s caught
between us

we are the walls
in which it yearns

for a prairie
clouds on the mountain

and a hawk
it hears

whistling in your chest.
Only when we’re very

close can that fire
squeezed out from

the space between us
(there is no

space between us)
leap to be

and be a beacon
to our understanding
the nameless
light of us

among all the too many
stars with names.

19 August 2002