

**Dulled by the hospital's wearing round
of invasive and degrading routines,
pushed near to hallucination by the
sickly green walls made pale
by being washed down too often,
The dying man finds his only comfort
in the kitsch crucifix hanging above the bed.
He is a city besieged.
He strains his neck to look
at his crucifix,
because doing so engenders thoughts.
Without those thoughts
he would have no sensations
to confirm that he exists,
for he has turned into glass.
He is powerless to create
thought on his own; he suffers
from mental asphyxia
and needs help from above.
Forces from the heart of the cosmos
are choking his thinking.
He cannot feel where his heart is.
He is surrounded by prostate disease,
headaches, bedsores, gurgling
chest, and listlessness.
He cannot imagine
for he is acquainted only
with the larval forms of thought.
This is because, of all his parts,
only his belly takes any part
in exchange with the creative ether,
and his gut is in terrible turmoil.
Everything about him is emaciated,
except his pain.**

He knows nothing
because he no longer has any words.
A plague has taken him
and us, and everything around us;
it has swelled to dizzying proportions
and the blue sky has become
blackened with the deaths of so many.
Amid the fumes,
amid spectral humours in the atmosphere
which, when inhaled, tore at his bronchiae
and lungs until they were
as sore as the skin of a flayed man.
Amid the miasma of indifference,
he fell ill, his being
infected, inflamed,
full of pain in its very fibres.
Crazed by lies,
doctors and neighbours lie in wait,
to feed on the carion.
He has been poisoned
by the same image substances
that transfix the criminally insane
in the cubicles around him;
like theirs, his mind is haunted
by shadowy simulacra.
His inflamed ganglia have been
cooked into tumours.
He longs to wed emptiness,
but his deficiencies no longer
have the power of expanding
to overwhelm the void;
and so he is reduced
to awaiting a letter of consolation,
that will come he knows not when.
When the red of evening's blood hesitates
for a moment in the window,

just before turning matte black
the man glues the hair at the top of his head
to the pillow and thrusts
his adam's apple forward
so that he can keep the crucifix in view.

He is thankful that night
is not the negation of seeing,
but, rather, that night makes visible
what the day renders invisible.

He pretends the hospital's smells
are holy oils that make him
imagine azure.

Oh, Apollinaire,
I saw you break
and die.

What has become of me, that I,
who am so fond
of the sight of movement,
am confined

Here

where no bird takes flight
and soars into the Open.

The hospitalized invalid concentrates;
his mind is focused like that
of a man who, condemned to die,
arrives, after long hours of waiting,
in broad daylight,
at the precise spot where
the sentence is to be executed.

Every object, every shadow,
every patch of light,
every movement in his narrow vicinity,
bears multiple meanings.

Nothing appears to him
in the same light.

But the invalid allows

his body to rot in the sunlight
while he dreams of dappled light
in forest clearings;
he is too green
to be transformed into azure.
He hopes that a truer light
will allow him
to simplify his desires,
by obliterating the dark phantoms
and chimeras from the past
that obscure seeing.
He doesn't dream of golden galleys.
He doesn't dream of Turkey in Asia Minor.
He doesn't dream of Dido in Carthage.
He doesn't dream of Arab market-places.
He doesn't dream of walking through water.
He doesn't dream of Hannibal's elephants.
He doesn't dream of wearing a disguise.
He knows he has worn out his welcome
in the realm where sleep is brief
and so he dreams of operating tables.
He dreams of keeping a ledger.
He dreams dreams of lust,
of gleaming skin,
of breasts, and fingers,
of thighs, and nipples
and testicles, and buttocks,
and hair rubbed deliciously
between the thumb
and the index finger.
He doesn't dream of sultan's tents
and minarets.
He dreams of lace,
tight skirts,
and perspiration.
He does not want to die.

He wants to be transformed.
He wants to become beautiful again.
He wants to turn from glass
into flesh. He wants to be animal.
He wants to think of soil.
He wants to think of the warm sun.
He wants to feel the breeze.
He wants to stop coughing,
so he goes visits shops that
sell creams and tubes and pills
and cough medicines that will
stop him from becoming light-headed;
he asks the pharmacist for his change
ever so politely,
so as not to alert anyone.
He wants to use the telephone,
but he is afraid.
He wants to become pliable
so as not to shatter.
He wants memory to stop
torturing him
and simply, to stop.
He awaits the annihilation
effected by the fluid on which
the oil-slick of life
forms for a moment.
When a gulf devours the sky
and footsteps in the corridor
become less frequent,
he feels the stars
breathing like a pulse on his skin.
Here on earth
he is panic-stricken.
He wants to make
a tour of the planets,
to purge his saturnine nature,

and to submit to the influence
of Mercury.
For whatever belongs to the sky,
there is no use
for the heart to carry on so.
In the sky,
one does not need
strength or faith;
the sun supplies all that is needed.
But while he is groping towards
metamorphosis, assassins multiply.
Sounds cannot reach him
Here,
nor can sounds protect him
Here.
He wonders, "Will I cease to exist
if no one thinks of me?
And what about those machines
that can erase memories?"
He wants this canticle of December
to cease. But the bird that cries
a tear-drenched lament
in the winter forest
exhales the breath of creation.
The lone bird, visible red in the
snow-covered tree warbles
a resonant word.
Born of the abyss,
transported by the wind,
as by flame,
naked, cold, alone,
the bird is nonetheless a herald,
sheltering every creature
from death, even
with its tiny wing.
The bird consummates the poem

that is so light
that it can enter the heart,
and make terror become one
with ecstasy. The bird warbles
so the sun will rise again
in this kingdom of absence.

Lhude sing cuccu!

Wel singses thu, cuccu.

Ne swik thu naver nu.

But so few hours remain
and only melody can win the prize.

The flesh vessel is sinking
on the sands of the far shore,
and the helmsman counsels silence
as preparation.

How I long for the warm breeze
to come in and sit in my chair!

How I long to turn like kite
in the free air!

Sunt lacrimae rerum

et mentum mortalia tangent.

Mentre ch'i' rovinava in basso loco,
dinanzi a li occhi mi si fu offerto
chi per lungo silenzio parea fioco.

Quando vidi constui nel gran deserto,

"Miserere di me," gridai a lui,

"qual che tu sii, od ombra od omo certo!.

Rispuosemi:" Non omo, omo già fui,
e li parenti miei furon lombardi,
manuoani per patria ambedui. . . ."

"Or se' tu quel Virgilio e quella fonte
che spandi di parlar sì largo fiume?"

rispuo's io lui con vergognoso fronto

"O de li altri poeti onore e lume,
vagliami 'l lungo studio e 'l grande amore
che m'ha fattor cercar lo tuo vulume.

Tu se' lo mio maestro e 'l mio autore . . ."

**Wo die Gefahr ist,
wächst das Rettende auch . . .
A saving force arises
in the midst of danger.**

II.

**Do you hear the sound
of flesh rubbing against flesh,
that calls for holy oil?
A girl is onstage,
alone on a bed,
her knees bulging up
under a red sweater.
Beside the bed, there is
a vertical brass rail.
She raises her head,
then lowers it again,
as if automatically.
I imagine your hand
inside my thigh.
From the dark,
I reach for your wrist,
to sense the structure
of other bones,
a firm, resisting structure
where touch will not disappear.
I feel your weight in my waiting hands.
I let the edge of you
ruffle my skin,
look down,
then close my eyes.
You do not disappear.
I do not think,**

**"What if there is no other
aspect to what is
Here,
where shadows abound?"
My hand rounds the corners
of shoulders and hips.
Outside, it is still a time
when what suffers has no image.
Inside, there is flow,
but no measured time.
Inside, whoever speaks
speaks in incomprehensible whispers.
Outside, a voice blares
on loudspeakers, but your words
are no longer dark --
they make you limpid.
The room is done in
red-velvet wallpaper.
The next one is wearing
a reluctant tin-foil gown.
The divans in booths
are highly ornamented
and have plush armrests.
Bald pates gleam, while
whistling mouths fall silent.
A fragrance rocks the place.
What is in back of all that is,
Here
where everything and everyone
is bereft of innocence.
This is a dance --
ein Todestanz.
But he is here because
he does not want to die.
He has seen black dogs in Mexico
who sleep without dreams;**

thereby he became acquainted with terror
and the revulsion of death.

He has visited European cemeteries.

He has watched blood blacken.

He has visited rue Ste Catherine.

He has visited rooms
where the curtains were drawn.

The aureate colours
of nothingness flower

Here,

offering their mysterious calm
to earthly places,

bathing dark green in immaterial gold,

-- the gold of what is transitory,
the gold of an embrace accepted,
the gold of fire.

This preciousness is light,
of great worth, the yellowed crystal
of a dying day.

A silence climbs out of words,
and becomes you.

I will begin speaking
where you left off,
because my words
are sufficiently obscure,
and this is a time of no learning.

Ne hadde the appil take ben
the appil taken ben,

Ne hadde never our Lady
a ben hevene Qwen;

Blyssid be the tyme
that appil take was

Ther-fore we mown syngyn
"Deo gracias!"

III.

A body has been sighted
floating in the sea. He bows,
as dancers surround him.

The clock is set.

As he sings, his body
turns into a skeleton.

Any suggestions for
preserving the dead
are welcome, though what is

Here

will have to do for

Now,

though what is

Here

is just a desiring-machine
the runs against the will.

This screen is not infinite
but it might as well be, since

Here

every thing is a sign,

and the sign of sign,

and so on, *ad infinitum*;

and further, just as words

need laws, this desiring-machine
consumes everything around it,
so that it might take form.

Whatever slips away from it
falls beyond thought.

Inscribed on a streaming body
this canticle renews beings;

a pencil of light

penetrates a glyph

and allows words
to pass through a glass box
and gives birth to dreams
that go unrecognized in the darkness.
The theorems that explain this
perplex geometry,
for what is

Here

arbitrates between shadow and the sun,
and joins the silence of mystery
to the substance of the earth.

Light gold whispers sounds
that serve as their own oracle.

The gods hear the oracles,
carried to them on fingers of air.

Lhude sing cuccu!

Wel singes thu, cuccu.

My fingers remember yours,
yours and the fingers
of those who write falsehoods.

Walking across the ruins
of the night sky,

I tremble at meeting you
at a place so high that light
licks at the edges of all things
and overflows their being;

but so it is that we
take light as we walk.

Amen.

Amid the rubble of the square,
someone signs a false name;

he pretends to be
the Keeper of the Book.

Your flesh is white with sleeplessness --
it has become chalky
with the death of time.

**Nihtes when y wende and wake --
For-thi myn wonges waxeth won --
Leuedi, al for thine sake,
Longinge is ylent me on.
I can summon your wrist
between my thumb and middle finger;
the very act of doing so
can conjure up images,
and act like a lens
run along the visible surface of skin.
May this stop the desiring-machine
from running perpetually.
May it help the days to glide away
as ungraspable as mercury,
until we all be born again.
May it restore spring.
May it restore all that was plundered.
May it keep me from failing,
and failing again,
and failing again,
and again.
May there come a time for which
duration is measured in sweetness,
and in which days linger
in the aromas of love.
May the limbo of lips expecting
other lips bring revelation
as naturally as water flows
over a slope of stones.
May the nocturnal allotment
transform desire into love.
May the joy of love
take form
Here,
so far from You,
so far below You.**

**By Your grace, may
the form of love show itself
Here
where You do not show Yourself.
May its light offer
something in the way of meaning
to those who heed the Word.**

IV.

**And he watches --
watches the boat from the far shore
come into sight,
watches a fire on the slopes
of Arapahoe.
The dreamt boat limps past the window
on its way elsewhere.
The day endures, coagulated
by the evening sun.
The invalid can still go down the stairs.
The dream he left unfinished
before going to sleep
is still intact;
in the morning, he enters easily
back into it --
a slight effort of attention
leads him through
the few dark chambers
he must traverse
if he is to recover the secret
that is not shown
Here.
In the evening, the windows
lose their light and**

the waiting begins again.
He waits for a fire to begin
to rage (though "rage"
is hardly the emotion).
He waits for the sake of patience.
He waits for God's time
to supplant earthly time.
He waits for an hour
when passageways will be opened.
He remembers the blessings of God,
and he begins to sing a hymn
of thanksgiving. Because, God,
You freed me from illusions and
allowed me to see things
in the magnificence
of their mobility and their colour,
I thank You.

In a world of motion and distance,
the heart flies from tree to cloud,
from cloud to star, and from star
to You.

An hendy hap ichabbe yhent,
Ichot from hevене it is me sent --
From alle wymmen mi love is lent,
An lyht on Alysoun.

Because You allowed me to submit to You,
Thank You, God.

Because You have sweetened my words,
Because You showed that You speak to me
and to all in the same words
with which we speak to You,
Because You showed me the mystery
that took away speaking without saying,
Because You agreed to swim in my blood,
Because while I was suffering from
miasmal hydrocarbon headaches

**You showed me the evil
of my neighbours, so that
I would not comprise
and be killed, as they wished,
Because at that time You protected me
and kept me from their harm,
Because at that time You spoke clearly,
so as to be heard amidst the
clamour and babble
of their ignorant confusion,
Because even in that time,
You allowed me to pray,
Because You drove a fiery stake
into my heart, and made breath fury
so that I might not be killed,
Because, even in a terrible inferno,
You gave me understanding,
Because You allowed
even a second-rate singer
like myself to sing and
You lent my voice beauty,
Because you showed me
the energy and the glory
of grill-men working the graveyard shift
in all-night diners,
Because You gave me leave to question,
Because a strange, electric glow
illuminates the air where You are,
Because everything comes to shout
of Your glorious presence,
I thank You.
Because of You,
all the noise around me
becomes voice,
and the voice becomes
the Word. For this, I thank You.**

Among the hearts of all those stammer,
You have chosen to prepare mine,
so that I can educe the reasons
for my rejoicing in what You have made.
May my words be no different
from those of the noble ones
who wait in silence.

Blessed are You, for allowing me
to understand that You are the God
not of the dead but of the living.

All I can see in window
comes alive in me,
but through You, and
what I can see in the window
is as uncountable as the numeral 'one'
followed by innumerable zeroes --
billions and billions of presences
whose sum is still less than You.

I thank You for rescuing me
from the nocturnal waters
of the dream of reason
and allowing me to feel
the full, naked presence
of the real.

I thank You for lighting many fires.
I thank You for giving me the task
of gathering together

Here

many scattered, and many lost, sparks;

I thank You for joining
the broken parts collected
Here.

I thank You for allowing me
to understand that
the work of creation
is still unfinished,

and is being completed
Here,
among these confined beings --
Here,
where the nebulae and the seas,
the perfect and the changing
join together. You have made me
a cause and a beginning,
through Your thought,
which You have given me.
Happy am I to carry
the life of Others in me,
and not their death.
For releasing me
by dominating me,
I thank You.
You have allowed me to borrow
without possessing.
You have allowed me to borrow
all that You have made,
and You have allowed me freedom.
This making makes me understand
that all making is redoing,
and what one redoes one understands.
You have enabled me to contrive
for each particular thing
its proper name,
and to greet it appropriately.
I thank You for presenting
a what-is that does not withdraw
at the same moment that it appears
before our eyes, a what-is
that is not closed to reading.
I thank You for that which shines
even in its very coming-to-presence
in and through the Word.

**I thank You for allowing me
to see that, through the agency
of the Word,
trial and death are only mediation.
I thank You that, because the Word
has entered time,
the Word does not immobilize
the beings it calls to presence.
I thank You that, because of Your light,
the Word does not impoverish,
disassemble or negate beings,
but makes them shine
in their coming-to-presence.
I thank You for this lesson
in the brightness and whiteness
of Death, in the portioning out of time
in passing moments.
Your Living Speech reunites
and reassembles, brings to
co-presence
what is discrete, separate,
sundered, partial, and finite
into the light of the single moment.
Your grace opens Your Words
to what is particular,
to what has only a proper name,
yet it brings what is particular together
in the reciprocal presence
of syntactical relations
(though it brings them together
in strife, and not in harmony).
I thank You for allowing me
to reassemble and reanimate
a few words, to allow them
to live to together and,
because they open onto an infinite**

radiance, to gleam.

**I thank You for allowing
Your Word to escape meaning,
and to commune with being
through the unity of its actions.
I thank You for making possible
the speech of the earth, in which
what greed has disassembled
is reassembled in the light of co-presence.**

**I thank You for the endless work
of transfiguration, which is the
illumination of the real.**

**I thank You for the tenacious hope
that always turns toward the same end.**

**I thank you that earth, fire,
the moment, and dwelling
can exchange together**

Here.

For what is

Here

**is fluid and impermanent,
allowing the many things
that come to presence**

Here,

**where being and absence commingle,
to slip pass one another,
in the same moment
which is the space
between words.**

**I thank You that, little by little
in successive stages,
finitude is made brighter
by Your Word.**

**Bless the light from which
we come; bless the time
when He will suspend the light**

**in the air
and withdraw His Word
into Himself.**

