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Specifics hard to come by—
half a leaf, enough
to recognize the sentence of its veins,
its name. Dry
in your fingers though
as if it had never breathed.
We are told that's what they do:
breathe, drink.

See what happens when stop drinking
the drunk man thought, letting this leaf also fall.

3 April 2009

THE HOLY INQUISITION

Ready for mauve.

Color: religion.

Race: Papyrus

a marsh we move in

trying to remember

up to our hips

in tepid water

reeds all round

us. Birds on reeds.

Identity of bird:

bleak, back soon.

Wing. Number

of wings: you.

Who is this we

of whom it speaks?

A masterclass

students with their

blind teacher teaching

water. Just stand

there is a lottery.

Everything counts.

Nothing works. Music.

3 April 2009

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Time for something better: weather.
Bagatelles about rain, socks, holes,
hats. Hairs in hats. Islands, rocks,
rabbits, rain. People standing
around in the rain waiting
for their hats to come home.
About putting on new socks.
About finding new holes.

3 April 2009

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And speak to him in many sorts of music
—Viola in *Twelfth Night*, I,2.

Ye apperceiving spirits from the lower air
where lovers spend their regencies, and such
gryphonic majesties who dare to dwell
inside the rationable shadow of a sycamore,
find me a leaf, that I may hum on him,
a green sound give him, and make him unlatch
our ordinary gates and let our goats
go in, feed, and come out sated – a secret lodge
of amateur nutrition – *speculum* means
mirror – they are content to feast on shadows
by which they seem nourished well – mystery
of key changes, modulation, the hint
of resolution in the anthem air
of “this sonata I died to write,” scenes
after this your life, when all the pompous
liberty of your earthly life is done.

3 April 2009

BEACON

Why I am so literal
you tell me yes.
Who needs to see it
what any body is,
am? Marksmen
maybe but who'd
want that? A shot
in the dark, a girl
in the park, Utopia
Boulevard, things
have names. Every
name is silly
if you think. Think
of all the maps
you memorized, all
the walls you imposed on
with your ready trove
of slick information.
Info we used to say
when we still expected
to get there fast
the other side of what
you say. Is said.

Can you see it
across the river
summer and winter?
Is there a chimney
on it and smoke
drifts north? Rain
must be coming.
Or northern elevations
could see some snow
if a rock has eyes
and really all things do.
I wonder about me
sometimes, I'm only
along for the ride,
the words do all the work.

4 April 2009

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What am I supposed to do,
read Shakespeare till I die,
whistle “Stormy Weather”
be a child all over again
go back to my mutttons
speak Robertese in mortal
underwear?

 You hear me
all too well already,
kind. Hum along with me
en route to silence
in a sexy car, your flesh
belongs to money
just like all of us,
no free lunch in Palestine,
never was never will be.

The gods are angry with us
so we turn atheist—
it is wrong for cities
to be far from water.
It is wrong to eat
small animals or give
your mother’s sealskin
coat away. Magic,

magic is the only government
and the best religion:
all practice, no believing.
Everything works
and the trees arrive.
If you love me feed my sheep.

4 April 2009

SEMAPHORE

Word thing

I love: that it could be

a bunch of sticks

beside the tracks

and a bright person too

the Sign Bearer

I would be, to carry

through the crowds of you

a proud blank sign

everyone must learn to understand.

4 April 2009

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Small hopes and hurried purchasers
undaunted by spring sales
shelter from the rain. Bodies shrink
away from bodies, the horrid touch of us.

Why do we despise what brings us together
and make touch a crime?
The human body is the murdered messenger,
Noah's Ark scuttled halfway home.

4 April 2009

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I pretend to know nothing
but really I know nothing.
This makes me a poet
with everlasting fuel.
A vacuum your words come to fill.

4 April 2009

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Wanting nothing and coming on hard for it
a trout stream loud after
rain over rocks.

Transcribe this,
priest. Mortgage your soul
to an opinion – the gyves of faith
close round the. The what. Soul
no man dares say—we forgot
that on the subway, left it
in the pocketbook you gave Goodwill.
Ate it. Poured it out in the woods,
weeping, and a fox watched you.
Foxes don't care and won't help,
they have their own theology
you will never come close to grasping.

4 April 2009

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All day long we watch each other
and all night dream of human faces—
what are we trying to tell us now?

4 April 2009

LAST CALL AT THE NO BAR

We never even started now we're done.
Walk with me into that queasy dawn
the thing that Brooklyn gives us every morning,
where do they get it from, they float it
every day above our heads and lose it in Jersey.
Agitated, I could not sleep till it came again,
sunrise is the end of something
if you're a thinking man. A wanting man.
A woman. Anybody who doesn't trust
the early-bird editions of the Times.
Anybody who doesn't trust anybody.
But sunrise at least let me go to sleep.
Miracle walker over Cooper Union,
a break in consciousness, a dream
of people venturing one by one
down their stoops and off to work
slowly, reluctantly, strangely beautiful.

4 April 2009

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Certainty breeds doubt.

Satisfaction breeds desire.

All manufactured moods

lock you in the cellar with no food.

There are noises in the wall.

How can anything live inside the brick?

4 April 2009

PORTUGAL

Eventually things dry. I call
it green and red with something yellow
I can't read. I abdicated
all my kingdoms and came here—
Anna's valley but I call it
Portugal so I don't have to understand
what people tell me in the street.
Feed me, I am the least of your problems,
sustain me with polytropic love.
It sounds good. You tell me what it means.

4 April 2009

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Last one for all of thee
a pause in heaven
becomes music on earth—

music is our way of listening
to what has words enough
but not for us.

We hear the silences of God
noisy from our hands and mouths.

4 April 2009

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It's almost time to throw your shoes away
and take that plane to Kurdistan
to find those Sufis you suppose.

Blue wool is everywhere,
just twine some yarn around your
yard and see. Here comes the wise.

Listen deep in your suppose. It hurts
so you know it's accurate, it keeps
you from sleeping so you know it's true.

That's all you know. Your poor shoes!
Gone, left among strangers, here comes
one now, are you ready? The Voice

of the Stranger is the Voice of God
it is written. Where? Right here,
you can still read, you haven't thrown

your eyes away along with your mind?
No, you're smarter than that,
the Path has no need for dummies,

love has no measure, that's the point
of it and everything else. There is a white
tree not far from here, older far

than anyone who looks at it, gives
the air of waiting, of having something
on its mind. But all wood does that.

4 April 2009

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Chaos in the cathedral, one of the prayers
turned round and answered back, a saint
came down from the wall in gold and scarlet
and beat the bishop with her lily

— Be silent,

silly, the prayers are finished long ago,
the last stone in the building was the final
syllable, now just lie down and wait.

But waiting is not Christian, he explained,
and sanctity is long ago. Revert to your
decorative condition, leave us, be wall.

But she wouldn't. She had come, and a saint's
business is the world, no distant heaven
but right here. She drove him from the altar
with her cruel lily, whistling a song

even the people in the benches knew
the tune of but not the words, the words
always needed to be new, they hummed
along with her and followed her
out of the noble portal into the mere town.

4 April 2009