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Will there come Sâr in truth to spell out
Péladan without a cloak? A card
hidden up every player’s sleeve:
that is the wind. You are my croupier,
I am the house. They lose to me
because their eyes are fixed upon your Form
while your spirit does its tricks. Anima
blandula, vagula, but she does come home.
Every day I come back to life! I hate gambling
— that’s my secret. That, and blue flowers,
that and the secret sonnets the heart hears
when other people hear the bus go by
verbaling up Crescent St. beneath a peach-pit sun
far over our heads in a greasy sky, I love it.
Hermetic habits — wearing live fish, birds
squawk on your epaulettes — reveal the Operator
at his best: in disguise, *vesti*, all imposture
and tweed cloaks, silk-lined assistants,
 wings. Some of us have wings. The sonnet
of course is the ideal hermetic form, twos
and sevens and eights and sixes, threes,
a sleekit timorous Babbage’s Machine
to think our way through Feelings to the Will.
A gizmo to think with! After a lot of heat
you get an animal that thinks like you,
that crawls out of the oven exhausted from love
soon wakes to new life, yours, till you can’t
tell it from a looking-glass, except it smells.

(But by that point you smell too.)
But I couldn’t understand it just as it was
the elm tree still alive and full of mocking birds
the Buddha statue –touching earth bear witness—
with little birds dithering around it, sunshine
everywhere, squirrels bitching, flowers and
a voice like mine coming out of the sky
saying stuff I couldn’t possibly have known,
rapture and agency and who loves you in dream—
then I was saying it too and you were listening
you looked at me as if I were me but I wasn’t
or not yet, but who is it who keeps this doctrine?
Where is Wisdom lodged now we have burned
down Her temple and set up a law book instead?
Could it be that the sky is really part of our heads?

19 April 2009
Speak as they come in and out
smelling of shower and clean clothes
because sunshine and the grass
hoists itself out of the soil again
for the millionth time
and car doors open and slam
and the porch light’s on all afternoon
in bright sun and voices,
and voices.

19 April 2009
As if they were parts of your hands
like loose impulsive fingers
the birds soar suddenly away and write
their own inscriptions on the permissive sky

that last as long as any message does
till someone reads it
and we all do read it, there,
all day long, and not often does one stop

to reflect on what has just been said up there
or what one has just read
or tried to read through all the evening birds
and maybe that is just as well.

19 April 2009
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When I touch someone else  
I stop being anyone at all.  

19.IV.09
But you will say: I don’t care about your stupid birds, when did they ever do anything for me? Can they explain Adorno or raise a rebellion in under-funded let’s-pretend democracies? Can they get government grants for artists? Can they make you better in bed or at the bank?

I am abashed, unvoiced. Yet they come quick and very gold, and they’re the first ones I’ve seen this year, so spring is real, late, late though, like the forsythia, late flowers, maybe they’re trying to tell me something too. Like you.

20 April 2009
all round. Wooden footbridge
across the old rail trestle over Rosendale
leads to the rock face
they come up this way to stand and read.
This countenance, less iconic than
the old man of New Hampshire who
from his granite face instructed me,
but this is still a face, stares back at me,
if you have feet, it implies a journey
from the heart of the sea
to the heart of the rock.
Carpets made of many-colored sands
woven in Isfahan. Blue faience
of Shawabti figures, those sky-dwellers
who came down to help the dead endure the tomb—
anything that’s blue.

Blue or mauve
or crescent green.
Hell is doing anything again—
hence opium, underworld,
Kierkegaard on repetition, used-up Don Juan
who is never far away from hell.
Blue is to be new. Look, fool,
it is the sky.
2.

But when you say divine
do you insist or imply
a personhood beyond the obvious,
you and me and the sultan, say,
some invisible animal that knows,
controls?

I dunno. I see him everywhere
in every girl I meet and most trees
in brickwork of old factories
and the deep optic weave of twenty-dollar bills,
he looks a little like Jefferson though,
Hank Aaron, Wittgenstein,
a bit autistic maybe like the sun
well-meaning as an ear of corn.
I don’t know about control – what is there
to control?

It all keeps happening.
The divine thing is to pay attention
and touch the fabric of it as it knows
itself into tomorrow.
3.
God means never finish one thing before you start another—

isn’t that the story of the Holy Grail

the Blue Mosque, Chinese pilgrims toiling

up the foggy slopes of Mount Omei

and up there He rides a white elephant made of cloud.

You look at him closely and you see a naked man all blue.

4.

Is that what you mean by weaving,

architect,

    design?

A thing is exactly the right shape

when you can see only its color—


to which the math teacher countered

if it were raining the grass would be wet

every single tender blade of it

so reason too has every now and then

something interesting to report

mostly about itself and how it thinks it thinks

but sometimes knows something about rain.


Which leaves undemonstrated, almost unseen,

the great mosaic Pantokrator of Palermo

glowering love down on me from a million chips of glaze,
the one you were asking about,
the lord of the world we nailed onto the cross

or burned in the lake or poisoned
or in the porches of his ear did pour
a hateful word, that’s the point,
when you look at the imbrications of the tile
rooftops of Lacoste, whereunder pale
pigeons hoot at dusk and the mistral rattles,
finds its way always in,

or when you count the glacial striations
in sunlight on the Mount Rutsen shale
you know that everyone is everybody else’s father,

don’t you see it yet,
and all the rest is mother.

20 April 2009
The woodpecker keeps telling it
— but what?
I can read his morse code
message he never meant to send.

20.IV.09
Letting the partner come late—
after enough time
the musculature relaxes
enough for something to come through
enough for the word to slip out—
when you’re almost finished the dance
the partner falls into your arms.

20 April 2009
Parts of a thing but not the thing itself—
Oh, you’re talking about birds again, morning, weather, the old reliables. Maybe I am, what’s it to you, fashionplate? King William saw this yellow finch an hour back and Caesar still is eating his light lunch, don’t you feel it yet? The birds, the birds are all the evidence we have. Evidence of what? That something’s happening, weather’s just the scoreboard, happening deep beneath the surface where we meet inside the señorita and the garden seat the apple and the bathysphere, your hand just now brushing hair out of my eyes, tender, confused, we cry out in our dream to help each other wake.

21 April 2009
I got caught in the size of things, a danger.
The great dome over the Hall of the German Folk
that holds a quarter-million cheering people
fits inside a madman’s hand. A lawyer
I thought you called yourself, and I was afraid.
But then I read the letter closely and you said:
It was the magnolia, you were right, but here
people say tulip, so I’m right too. Trees
have more names than one but just one word.
I thought it was law but it was flower.
Words have different names too, can’t always
be Plato in my head, sometimes sit by me
on a rustic bench, uncomfortable, eating
prunes right from the box. Or primes. We are fools
in love with what seems accidental fact.

21 April 2009
Looking forward to the other side
the passenger studied the fish
unusually prolific in the channel
it must be spring the passenger thought
and tried to count them
had reached ninety three then lost count
as a wake-wave tupped the boat
and one’s eyes rose of themselves
to the approaching but still distant shore.
Home soon. The place where numbers
don’t count anymore. One’s door,
one’s shadow on one’s bedroom wall.
Still the fish streak under one’s affairs.

21 April 2009
NONAGONS

The order of things is a bird outside
Mourning dove cooing in some seed
Crystal sphere hangs in eastern window
Faceted with intermittent color – a hue
Like peach varying to that elusive mauve
Crayon labels used to call flesh—
Understanding which gives a nameless man
Certainty he has come to the right place
To carry out his latest rich man’s stunt.

*

For we are various in wealth, and riches
(The crystal light has turned to blue now
Diamond-deep or sea-foam green) are functions
Of our sense-impressions, and the man in question
Is rife with senses if not much else. *Tumult*
*Of notice* – he lives on that, no time for feeling nothing.
He thinks perhaps this new place will chasten him
Ease his money back into the bank, closing time,
Let the affects sleep the silence be born again.

22 April 2009
Discourse on the divine: that alone
is what he needs to summon into language.
Don’t leave God to the believers,
don’t leave Spirit stapled in some billion-copy book.

He is chosen to attend the Birth of God—
God too is reborn – once upon a time that was
the single work of poetry to announce,
god after god, in all our island creoles,

age after age till all language shrilled
and chattered with adoring, imploring—
*Description is pure worship*, he writes,
*There is nothing I can say that is not Thy word.*

22 April 2009
The urethane deposits on the seventh moon once thought inexhaustible are now depleted—are they exploited from below? Are there animals besides us in the world? In church they talk about Automatic Grace—the world loves us—we are special—but at times you’ve got to wonder: where do things go? Who is it keeps moving the clouds around telling us things we read differently down here and we could fight about, defending every dumb interpretation? Who took the atmosphere away?

23 April 2009
TIME TO RENEW

the sources of our inspiration
what are those?

A man in leather boots
a woman coming in the door—

nothing more will ever be known.
Or: that’s all I know,
the ground is hard, she goes out and comes back.
Is that just dream? I heard her scream
as she was dreaming

or I was, nothing’s clear,
tell me. There was a table too,
boots and a woman and a table.

I tried to sleep through it but puberty came
I played chess with Mahler, learned to dream
in another language, wrote poems in it
and called myself a speaker.

Lies, all lies,
my native language is sidewalk and brick wall
angry uncles and ripped-down ivy, broken doors
and an old man limping down the street.
My native language is dog. And I deny.
It barks and doesn’t know what it means by doing so.

23 April 2009