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IF IN MY OWN HOUSE

If in my own house a passenger
smiles at me across the aisle
closes her bible for a moment, a finger
of her right hand still sunk in Deuteronomy,
can I bring out my sly brocaded lute
and croon to her my latest exercise
in moral iffiness, a tune between friends?
She is perhaps a Mormon lass and deep
inside her purse another scripture rides
pointing her way to a better galaxy
just past my windswept dining room.
Both of us have a word up our sleeves—
turns out we are servants in the same great house,
she works for the master I have never seen
while I am one of the countless secretaries
his visible wife keeps busy. Nice lute,
she says, but I'm stone deaf. Me too
say I, but I still keep playing.

26 May 2007

REVELATIO UXORIS

When a man gets married, a journey starts of pure knowing. The girl he thinks he's married is just the first face of a million-mansioned personhood that the rest of his life discloses phase by phase, a look here, a shadow there, a word strangely stressed, or one sunset a beam of late light suddenly opening the infinite recession in her soft green eyes. And that's just seeing and hearing.

Every day is an exposition of her differences, the little tunes that tell when she dissembles or says true, the little so very small gestures that to his ever-learning eye become lighthouses on an immense and fertile sea. She is so many and so good, so much a multiple of what he –even in love—thought she meant.

In some way like this, the religious man, daring to conceive or even imagine the highest deity, calls her one day Wisdom, or one day Tara, or one day Vajravarahi or one day Mary, Mother of God.

26 May 2007

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The war will not happen.
It cannot happen because it has happened already
and everybody's dead.
Corpses can't fight corpses. Can they?

27 May 2007

GEIST GEGEN SEELE

Who wrote the words to this light?
I can't even hear it over the dawn.
Tantamount repose. Wake.
The world shuts its eyes
then I can see.
But what I see
scares me to sleep.
Eternal battle between spirit and soul.
The world shouts its yes.

27 May 2007

AS IF I KNEW

As if I knew where I am
and stood there, pleasant even,
not being strident or stubborn,
not even waiting, just seeing
what happens, or just seeing
what happens when nothing happens,
my mind quiet as a tree.

2.

But what kind of a tree?
Writing is a kind of pain,
a writhing in the hand,
hurt bone, a harm.

Yet it gives light
the way that even fire doesn't,
I have seen the whole woods at night
lit up by a single word

written, read, remembered.

3.

You have to say.
You have to say which.
They gave themselves to you
to be said, each
her particular pleasure

earth to be pressed and penetrated
fire to show everything as it is
water to give pleasure
air to understand.

4.

And air understood is earth.
And fire illuminating its own self is water.
I belong to the six feet of grass on which I die.
I belong in other words where I am.

Effortless I am looking at the sky.

27 May 2007

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I had forgotten where my hand was
and had to wake to find it.
Even then it was unclear – the book
it rested on felt realer than it did,
the hand, the forgotten, the love you.

27 May 2007

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Whenever anybody chooses to die
they bring their tiles and papers to a church
and burn the latter on the former

till the heat makes the tile crack.
The crack is what the papers meant all along.
If it says the right thing one is free to die.

The business of priests is to reach such fractures.
It is like being an old dog of a poor old woman.
No one is allowed to die by himself.

27 May 2007

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Authority takes the form of a taxi
Moving fast on a country road
Just before rain. Divinity means
A certain line on a woman's palm.
Can you read this? Can you understand?
Tradition means a woodpecker
Hammering at an old linden stump
Under the buttonbush. Is that clear?
Where were we coming from
To decide to stay here? Everything
Is true. Circumstances just
Stand around. What the word means.
What everything had in mind.

27 May 2007

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The note of despair
Genuine,
The despair is not.

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THE INSTRUMENT

And this pen
that sat out all the winter, what
is coiled deep inside it now
that it wants me to tell the paper?

A thing is a permission
all set to speak, a franchise, a right of way,
a history book, your fake I.D.,
the sweet palaver of matter
that Time (I guess
time just means movement)
ensouls for us
in this hard land. Now listen, hand.

28 May 2007

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Looking around the world a long time
I find nothing dead.

Things change the way addresses change,
entity moves from thing to thing.

But what I thought sometimes was dead
was only sleeping. Or I wasn't listening.

Talitha, koumi! to the whole world he said

28 May 2007

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That sound I hear
like cicadas in the woods
cool August night in May?

Time rubbing its wings
in me, preening, settling dust.
Nothing is ever going to stop again.

28 May 2007

BASIC ENGLISH

Sometimes do things wrong and then
Basic English is the only help.
Say it simple and maybe,
maybe it becomes simple.
Art (not just alchemy)
means turning a thing into itself.

Now it's right but don't
listen too hard. Let it go
into the hearing. The sun
is slung low in the woods,
rain still falls from the leaves.
What could be easier than going down?

28 May 2007

THE OLD MECHANICAL PENCIL SPEAKS

“No one muzzles me but apathy –
which mostly looks like you,
seasonal creature who holds me now
in your forgetful hand. I was made
to tell the truth. Pray, what is your trade?”

28 May 2007

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Where shall we keep her today,
in the pudding or nice and dry
in the crook of the linden tree?

Shall we let her listen to the bees?
Will God find her? Now
or then? Sand or sailor?
Spring or after? Are we ourselves

anything but questions, no meat
on our bones but what we ask?
And first of all where shall we
find her? Or have be found her?

29 May 2007

THE VALLEY

Trains slog south along the Ulster side,
lose track of how many cars all full
of stuff for New York. On this side
the elegant commuters glide north
always behind schedule on their way
to hypercrowded parking lots my god
they park up the trees around here,
every wife has seven kids every kid
has four wheels wheels wives men
kids how much air is left to breathe?
In between, the river flows like pewter
famously running two ways at once.

29 May 2007

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The hour glass is on the fritz.
Sand flows uphill fast. Water
snickers at our bewilderment,
says "Things are always
as they are a little while
only, then they change."
Air has changed its place with earth.
This could be death. You'd better fly."

29 May 2007

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Something said. An hour
is all waiting. Or
time is the face of appetite.
When you don't want anything
no time passes. Or a thousand years.

30 May 2007