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But is it always too much for me I think it is, the sea

and these august vivacious personages who haunt its in and out

approach approach recede recede a million year ballet they've made of that

simplicity

and the seal is my mother. Ten years after her death

we saw her in Galway Bay, her kind eyes calm company she kept us as we strolled.

have built my house
 of many failures
 each one apt for its function

a mosaic a thousand chips of broken glass add up to Christ looking down sadly farewelling the earth

but he can never leave. And my house of failure stands tall on the hillside—

a ruin has no enemies birds and lizards and echoes all live at peace in the shade.

Where we work

is always another. *A don i ram* the chords spell out, Adoniram the architect who is slain into his work

And the temple also vanishes into time.

The work a man has done goes into thin air when his life is gone, the same air into which his last breath yields,

and the name of his death is his son.

But this thin air of ours thin as paper holds the work in suspension always that is the Lost Word of his Freemasons, the word once spoken can never leave our world,

our world is the place where every word is wrapped,

word lost into air and it is the movement of the air we hear, word lost in the ear.

I'm listening to an old opera nobody knows, about Solomon's Temple and the Queen of Sheba, and the mysterious architect who built the latter's form into the former so that she lives forever in what has been lost,

Gounod's *La Reine de Saba*, into which the words of the great mystic poet Nerval are lost, lost into the singing, lost into music and the music lost 1 find,

the Queen is singing as I speak.

As if there were something we had to do first even before waking

so we lie there in bed and open our eyes conscious of having missed something already

what was it, an opportunity, a glimpse of some god?

I want to tell you about it whoever it was the boy on the swing reading a book as he moved more by gravity than by will, swayed by what we share, air, earth, fire, water. And you who are listening to me now.

An impertinence, from me to you, one more of so many, a not quite legitimate caress.

Watch. Activity of some sort rappelling down the rock face

or just a face, a man's face, not all that old,

you scaled the bridge of the nose, now the overhang of brow

and the one descending meets you there and you discuss the Person

on whose calm face you climb. Is he dead? Asleep?

Enlighted? Indifferent? Why doesn't he brush you away?

Why are we permitted still our ascensions and descents?

We live on a planet of forced marriages. The extravagant architecture of a grasshopper dizzies our aesthetics, we creep along full of unlikely loves.

# CARREFOUR

Centuries of dismay walk around the same old streets

same one, same old crossroads a hundred thousand years,

crossroads we are about them, sitting, intercepting, never going anywhere

that's the half of us.

The cross and the arrow: the stayer and the goer.

The right spot and the all gone.

Spirits of the utterly gone are gone. What stays are airs they moved by speaking. These perdure.

Vibrations linger, part of a vibratory dream

we machine.

All the ancestors have gone down into us.

Our ghosts walk along the London street, father, grandmother, a statue of someone who looks terribly like you

yourself, there, over the somber garden. Maybe we are the ghosts as music is the body's ghost

the hands the chest expand the air

the god

is there!

And then the singer dies. Ghosts chase us in the streets.

(to celebrate Pir Zia's academy)

The heart behind the heart we have we need the columns of her house

one single child is running in her shadows, hides behind every column turn by turn

one single child who keeps me on my toes panting I follow

and strange to say you're chasing after that child too, you're quick when I'm slow

you stop when 1 go hardly ever do 1 get a clear sighting of the child

sometimes 1 do hardly ever get a glimpse of you also pursuing

sometimes when I stop to catch my breath and stare deep into the shadows of her house I wonder if you might be the child I'm chasing

or maybe even I'm the one you're after all these years heart of the other.

 still need the sky.
 try to live without but there it is

every now and then it kisses the nape of my neck and then I know

But what do 1 know? the goal is the path. Struggle to be here—

there are August days when ice cream is answer enough.

[answering Harvey Bialy's image, "The One of the South & the One of the North"]

He put down his measuring tape and stalked off through his eyeglasses into the amber world

Yes, I am here again he said when he got there

men swinging hammers a flock of purple finches bothering the trees

So that's what they mean by ritual he thought and thought again

there is no ceremony but the skin.

# CASTAWAY SUMMER

Drift out of a former revolution. Close quartered, an army sleeps.

Is that you, jackdaw, perched black with a little white

on the phone pole, listening? Are you listening to me?

Teach me her profile clear so I will recognize it when she comes

evening sky, no stars.

### Know what darkness knows

a life for the perceiver ripening in these, down there where music rises to the surface like pain, one more mysterium

Of an eye opening garage door swings up empty smell of warm old wood kept into cool twilight dead space suddenly wakes

"like pain" as if a comparison could ever or could even as if.

Big plans try to let go of plans Big plans of being able to let go

A fetch they called it who from me went out into the pretend world pretending to be successful as an ordinary a man on the street a man on two feet but failing would come back real enough to rend me, break me into my elements and ocean them ever away

as if God had come and touched me

as if God were a thought I had sent out

to explain the world now come back to rend me

three-person'd Deity I and you and those scraps of matter once called me

ich nichts

And this molecular recombining the sage calls Love and writes hymns to

we are safe in the process every word comes home the mind empowerment

A trickle of water down my cheek or is it sweat

We are guilty of our explanations.

## ALERTNESS FINALLY KICKS IN

The ship, tired of sinking, sticks to the postcard waves. Orange sunset, purple troughs of sea, the works. Send it to me so I can know what going looks like, a single shape snouting somewhere invisibly far through some sustaining medium. Oh. Now I get it, there is nowhere to go, only the boat. The passengers busy with deck shuffleboard and tom collinses and playing quoits really are just standing still. The ship stands, still on its postcard, named. 1 think 1 am beginning to understand.

if I could have anything it would be to have the natural compassion wanting not to lose a single soul a single life a single grain of salt

but does my wanting that mean it's close or even further away? desire distances. actual feeling nears.