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There's not much left.
A table, some chairs.
It's all you need,
To sit around
And come to understand.
This is me
At last
Talking to you,
Honest, boring
As the real
Is to children
Those impatient
Deities I
Hope I still am.

A table, chairs.
Sit in me
And tell me
Who you are
Listen to my answers
Make themselves up
My bones your breath
Together adding
Up to some special
Kind of truth
New every hour

The only thing that counts
Is what we have to say.

17 May 2002

THE WINE

Why is everybody afraid of my wine?
It has little alcohol or none,
Comes from the purest fruit
A vine that crawls along the mind
Until it reaches the city it surrounds.
Everything grows inward to express
The personless fact of being we inherit,
Inhabit, divide
Speciously into me and thee.
When all there really is is you.

17 May 2002

=====

(Again I stand overwhelmed by the mystery of music
how can it have ripened
in so few years
to the intricacy of feeling
that chastens us already in Bellini or Mendelssohn
exalts us in Beethoven
makes us poignantly uneasy in Schumann and Mahler---

how can it *happen* in us?
Is it the work of the orchestra,
the only plausible metaphor ever made for the body itself?)

18 May 2002

=====

I think I have finally left you behind
you for whose sake I lingered at the wheel
never finishing my task

you who always
had something less in mind,
interesting details, passagework, projects
halfway between Buddha and the bank.
Last night I let you out of my dreams
and you were left without me to cry out your name.

18 May 2002

MAN ASTONISHED BY SNOW IN MAY

He swears
on his medicine
on the hawk
restless overhead he
has never seen the like

big soft flakes
sailing through the trees
in the middle of May
but he lies
his dreams are full
of such anomalies
coronations
of impossible queens

and his eyes
are the same
the snow straight down
mixes with rain
everything he says
he says again

the mind anticipates
severallest occasions
inclining this fall
but if each flake
had or was a word to say

would that also be
something he heard
long ago maybe
between sleep and waking
no one said?

18 May 2002

[Saturday morning May eighteenth -- 32° and snow drifting down, accumulating only as a slush on sleek surfaces, changing later to rain. The latest snow we've ever had here.]

It is snowing, the latest
snow I've ever seen here,
flowers settling past green trees.
And they're playing
Mendelssohn,
then Debussy, on the radio,
to aid the dreamlike
freshness of things.
Freshness. Everything new.
Nothing can be lost
because nothing is really
there to begin with,
just the always renewing
notice of the mind,
the joy of knowing.

18 May 2002

=====

Leap in love
the cold wind
counting definite
articles to be
with you only at
last the train
comes goes and
we are rescued
from the infirmity
of travel dancing
in our place.

18 May 2002

D U R U M

What is hard
beyond the personal
to express

 a weed
 growing underneath the sea and never wet
something red engorged and hard
as if the condition
of creation were a plague

bring out your living

the sky must be the real answer
the real oracle is close
obvious and the biggest thing

the answer always is the obvious
refine the metal till it's animal
beat the animal till it talks

then listen.

 Rota
 a wheel, a hard wheel
a new thickness
 and what is thick is called a book
it is money on earth and snow in heaven

it is a scale
in the Parsee's fingers
the small brass weight
to tell

they have to be taught to be stars
old cultures know
leave everything where it is and look into the sky

separate the lights

and understand
a word nobody said

the Koran created man.

19 May 2002

Mystery of birds.

A red-bellied woodpecker
on the branch by the window
he looks down at his own breast
must also see the ground

self-inspection
is reconnaissance of earth

where you are
is who you are.

19 May 2002

if I could give the flower that I gave
I'd catch it higher on the wind
each time to lift the whole experience
like a pelican in flight against the current
low but aspiring, aloft but enamored
of the tracks of fish and thought below

a nexus sky, world full of meetings.
If I had the flower I gave to you
I'd give it to you again but higher
why-er, determined to have an explanation
sunset red dawn's orange dark is dark
we seem to be priests who can't ever
stop saying mass, can't stop embodying.

20 May 2002

SKELETON KEY TO A NEW CONSTITUTION

A sketch of it. Dawn
long. Last night
May frost. The late

season. The leg swollen.
The butterfly. Some
are permanent. So go.

Embarrassment of monarchs
Calendars. Look a leaf
in the eye, how many
times sing the same sin.

21 May 2002

LOVE MACHINERY

love machinery rock
outcrop by the station
drain this fever

god of cups touch
tone taste color
maidenfern

deliver all who
one night same hearing
vascular resonance image

scared comfortable mechanism
to be the thorn
in some side

is still to be
in the dark on the deck
island looking ship

a tree from an old war
only here oily there
licking fingers to

remember the lost word.

21 May 2002

LIVERY

They contract around the edges
and have far to go. The Israeli limo
takes you to the airport weekly
though the planes are unreliable
sometimes you wind up in Spain.
At least they have pomegranates
there and no extradition treaty.
You write postcards to poets up
in the Berkshires, you envy each
other for being home or abroad.
Everybody's famous in the same way.
No, darling, the point is becoming
A celebrity while you're still young.
The point is. Never mind,
your cab is waiting, Shlomo
the authority on silverware today,
Marko is sick from bad shellfish.
Hello hello Terminal Seven
oh there again, I thought you broke up.
No it's different it's Africa
today, I never went there before.
You'll be sorry they eat with their hands.

21 May 2002

TABLE

Three roses floating in a blue bowl.
Your job is to name the color.
Salmon saffron. Yuma sunset peach.
Autumn crocus orange. But the shape
is part of the color, isn't it.
The rose, all that sheer receiving,
concealing, all hint, all hoping,
the mannerly petals in waiting,
the shadow, the light arriving through.
Try again. Not-yellow-not-orange.
Punjabi lovers sharing a mango at dusk.

21 May 2002

IRISES

1.

They bloomed overnight
even though it's still too cold
to sit outside.

Who knows

what I know?

Ibn Arabi writes: Allah is all there is to know.

If God is the sum of all knowing
every act of cognition
is deific definition.

I think, therefore He is.

2.

Prepare for the fire ceremony
offer the irises
their purple flames
have already offered themselves

every time I'm in a garden
I feel like an impostor
any minute they'll root me out

a cool wind comes quickly out of the sun
like an old man believing in miracles.

22 May 2002

O-MAI SHAN

for M.G.

So leave the mountain where you found it,

that's the lovely logic
mountains teach,

O-mai Shan
how many

days to climb

carrying the image of the Virgin
on your scapulars

climb
into the deployment of the sky
that endless war

cloud soldiers guard you from your thought.

This is called Bringing the Virgin to Paradise.
This is called China.

All round you, Buddhist pilgrims

stretch out and seem to kiss the ground

as if it is the actual face of heaven.

23 May 2002

THE STEWARDESS SMILES

Desire is always for something
else hence void in itself.

Her hip brushes their shoulders
as they sleep, slack
bodies tilted in the aisle.

Desire is the same as anger,
both sleep in ignorance
breeding inauthenticity.

If I really existed you would also be
complete in the fact,
we could all relax until
the genuine destination
not even one of us guesses yet.

What is actual
desires nothing but itself.

23 May 2002

SIMPLICITY

I love mountains
because I can look down
and see the earth spread out

I love the earth
because it is what God
sees when he looks down

I love God because
whichever way I look
I find his name in my mouth.

23 May 2002

ON DECK WITH IRIS

Not on deck, the deck.

Morning. Not Iris,
irises. Though I remember
a rainbow walked
talked, did the things
women did when flowers
still made names.

My deck and six
irises, whose? And why
am I telling who this?
An otherwise flowerless
afternoon with purple
flags they called them
tall strong on such
slim stems spring-mounted.

And who knows where
any given rainbow
is now, robins yelling
cars going by
each one with a face
or faces in it I've never
seen before I've
slept with everyone.

24 May 2002

Waking brings you
Suddenly to the
Heart of the world.
There is nothing eccentric
About morning.

24 May 2002