To meet you new
words in light
without a hand
to say the way

just here a mark
on the simple
sky of what is there
as a star is

bright remnant
of a process
a thought perhaps
or thinking

still going on
right now right
here it all is
it’s up to you

18 March 2007
Memo to self Buy
a few silk flowers
today in town
where such things grow
bring home the colors
neatly folded
in Asia by mother
nature’s fingers
weary on someone
else’s hands
for my contemplation
the twist of a rose.

No roses don’t do
best better try
a simpler fluting
a daffodil or.

18 March 2007
STILL LIFE

Dollar bills near the candlestick
not now illuminating what money
bought, no old huzzahs of flame
to worry hostesses. Just this
cobalt glass receptacle, cold wax.
And money.

Money is a still life
after my own heart, three L’s in a row
and green all over. Most of them are ones
ture, but most of the world is ones,
one thing at a time and before you know it
apocalypse, rapture, Osiris soul-boat,
Saint John on Patmos mouth full of fire.
Not like my poor little spent votive light
god knows how many summers back
the work of bees.

18 March 2007
CLEPSYDRA, Part Two

An ordinary evening in wherever you live
in other words, a sparrow
or sixteen sparrows just as useful
as some immigrant blackbird
back too soon, tricked by lengthening
daylight to arrive before the snow is
finished with us. Us. The birds
are a kind of comfort, counting them,
like James Merrill at his dining room table
taking dictation from the freesias.
The way we do. We. Note
the frequency of the same mistake
over and over. Same. Names
stagger through the mind, of course
anybody older than an infant is
already drunk on reminiscence
half the time. And the rest of it?
Kisses and glazed donuts. Us.
Faltering chemistry of an old theology
can’t get the water to turn color.
The wedding feast turns slowly sober,
somber, all the guests go home and leave
the bride and groom awkward as lilac
bushes before the springtime comes.
But in the tired ovens yogurt still
jells or comes or whatever they call it
when it ceases being liquid overnight
Enemigo mio, you bite my bitter root
for once. Wait, where did poetry
come from to begin with?
How did language happen to the world?
Serene lagoons with quacking ducks
and no adjectives anywhere in all the world.
What happened to silence? Is it natural
to have so much to say? Do men
work hard all day every day to pay
for pillow talk till dawn, then they wake
and hear their wives crying beside them? So many deaths and no one dying. Anything could happen, just ask for it. It. Where did it come from, our youngest pronoun? Susan explained how quiet it is in the Antarctic, she could hear only her heart in all that stillness, blood in her ears, a little wind and each wind a separate word. My heart said something too then, go home to silence, laddie, follow the woman in the snow and when she stops keep going. Go. Heartbreak of the smallest words. You.

18 March 2007
CLEPSYDRA, Part Three

Even a little boy is looking for God. We measure time by drinking it. *The Very Liquid Hours of John of Sodus* unfolds illumination by illumination how did this letter get so red, a big red letter and a lot of little black, we see a little boy beside the lake and liking it. The book’s a better lake, a book you carry home and swim in all night and never drown. The big of a book. Unlimit me, every child wants that. Through the lake a shallow trolley car out of Miyazaki leaves a quiet wake towards Toonerville. It takes a life of comic books to free the will, read Dante, understand Brahms. Here it comes, crowded with your favorite characters. All those ducks. The Phantom. The tell-tale whiff of Turkish cigarettes sneaks in from Wolf-Ferrari’s opera. Even a little boy knows the wind comes from somewhere. Has to. But where does water come from? Reads books about endless cycles, molecules surfing in their spendthrift way, closes them and thinks instead about the Mystery of the Yellow Room. Chance may be the Mother of all things but she is not my mother. Of whom I do not speak and do not keep silent either. We measure time by counting mothers till we know how many lives we’ve had since the Greeks started keeping tally. And all the Greeks are good for is touching us, lover stuff, sly verses to augment propinquity. Skin and penetrated vacancies. And bliss.
God is an anthology of absences he thinks. This is the very hour I was born but who is speaking? Time has a wanderlust built in, it’s never now for long, and then the lake begins again. The trek. I heard, but who was speaking?

18 March 2007
TWO PART INVENTIONS

One in each hand
use all your fingers
tune your last chance

*

Then the organ-grinder set his monkey
to clamber up cathedral walls

where Maureen O’Hara cowered in the gallery
waiting for a different sort of suitor

but this one came, nibbling her ankles
and identifying all this fuss as music.

*

Nothing is truer than the movies.
Even when you’re too tired to dream
their instructive simplicities
spool out all round you, black and white
at that hour of the night, women
in panther skins, thugs with shoulder
holsters speak what sounds as cold
and crisp as English verse. Nothing
you actually see can be irrelevant.

*
They keep your mind alive all night.
Not so simple to get the easy right.
We are raised up to be difficult,
sun in our eyes, bus never on time.
Gender relations make up ninety
percent of human enterprise.
At least on earth. The little left over
is yours to build a new soul from.

*

Which part is this, the schooner or the sea?

19 March 2007
the kind from who knows who
and how they got out of him
and into me unknown, the kind
I have already in my vitals
juicing and spooking and busy
remembering everything I ate
and thought for all I know,
I mean the ones I am and who
am I descended from on my
body’s side, could one poor
old Irish woman make all this?
Something’s wrong with history.
Something’s left out: we forget
the caped figure who brings
to every infant born a jar
of possibly selected inner parts
the mother carefully assembles
then forgets in her turn
that she’s done any such thing
and we go swanning around the world
assuming we are natural. Nothing
could be further from the truth
than nature is. We are made
in darkness, by invisible agents
who wind up the junk inside us
and make us strut until
the hour comes that they assign
careful in their way no doubt
their long fingers looking up
the scary info in their secret book.

19 March 2007
SAINT JOSEPH STANDS ON THE DECK

Four feet of snow and then down there
where some green will be. Only one day till spring
and you’d never know it. Grumble grumble.
A man is born to grouse. His spouse
learns to tolerate his endless articulation
of dissatisfaction with the way things work.
Don’t work. It still is snowing, spring
is hours away. A white earth has a dignity
of its own, old man’s hair, old man
with young wife, infant child. All the children
in the world are his, since not even one
of them really is. Follow his logic
like snowflakes whirling in the wind
caught in lamplight. There are foxes
out there, rats on the rafters, birds
huddled on the branch. Only he
seems to be alert, groaning is good
for awareness. Pain catechizes,
griefs anthologize. One by one the birds
refuse the crumbs he tossed an hour back.
They’ll wait till they can eat unseen.
All round him all the time are people eating.
I have kept my mouth closed forever.
No one will ever turn me into a quote.

19 March 2007
The ceremonies endure us then the music begins. Vanilla somehow always my favorite, the intimate initiation of that soft brown mysterious pod, the little sheath that makes things sweet. So you begin with a receipt. Talmud or Roman Missal, or any big black car. You get out when you get there, though often you’ve found it comfortable, even comforting, to go on sitting there, your head against the bolster and your natural eyes closed feeling the soft heat the cooling car gives off internally, like a word it will not speak but only you can hear. Or the closing book. Vehicular, Blake’s word for it, anything at all that carries us. Vows, Jack said, we’re studying Vows, when asked how the girl was doing. Not asked what but how, but we always get the answer the system has ready, primed for such aggressions. Every question is an attack, always. Even Pardon me where is the library? really means Take me there take all the books down that will please and read them to me, can’t you smell my need, you jerk? Give it to me. But be at peace. Only the head of the stone Buddha shows above the snow. Your body too is hidden inside what happens. The influence of the planets is just as strong in broad daylight but something else in us is sleeping.

20 March 2007
Snow melting on the roof.
So many days. So many nights
the stars. And one day then
you look up and find them gone,
all of them, the Earth returned
to the empty space
from which it came.
Then we’ll be alone
and we will all alone
have to cherish and repeat
what we clear or dimly heard
of what the stars were so
busy saying all those years.

20 March 2007
WHAT IS NATURAL

Very cold. And spring
is four hours old
already with us. The days
are out of synch with sun.
It’s like an ordinary man
falling in love with a lamp post
because an ordinary woman
once leaned against it
long ago in a cartoon.
Where most of his mind
came from to be here,
all the mice and cats turned
into Hegelian distinctions
and bodies on their way
from bed. Dogs bite,
holes are dark in the day,
music is pathetic really
the way it holds on to us
so needy, no hysterical.
Sound is so insane,
raindrops, howl of a wolf.

20 March 2007
FACE

Such a long way to travel
to wind up inside a single image
like a wanted poster on the P.O. wall,

all your lives and aliases compressed
in one bleak helpless surly face, yours.
Locked in the mirror whenever you need it.

21 March 2007
Hidden rhapsodies
inside the gush of talk,
sleek skin sensitive and deep
inside the hostess’ clothes.

The fun of a party is to get
inside the outside of everyone
before it’s done
and still manage to go home alone.
We waste so much time saying the obvious that we never get around to the clock on the wall, gilded sunrays coming out of it all the way from Austria, Innsbruck I think, where the mountains are really in the way. Or clock on the ormolu table, both for sale. Shadow. Afternoon among antiques never, too sad. Only morning, when sweet greed is at its highest pitch. Fueled by maple syrup they cruise through the valley after bargains. Just like us. But we have other merchandise, sinister snicker, girls on ice, no, we mean the simple sunshine of self-help books strewn about the library after a group finishes its discussions. The librarians are pleased in their clean clothes. Here, learn how to budget your time and still have time for three-leg races, horseshoes, tofu barbecues, keep an eye on cholesterol. It’s always summertime inside a book. Read quick and don’t remember: the words if they’re any good do all the work.

21 March 2007
Getting home ahead of it.
Who. The dark phonecall.
That shadow on the moon
wasn’t there when you were born.
You think. The animal
slinking down the snowbank to the stream.
Who are these memories,
the girl in the tree
is fifty now and worried
about other branches.
Snow melt drips from the eaves.
Why is everything in the middle distance?
Where did my skin go?

22 March 2007
It could have been a storm or a $5 bill. Police are questioning bystanders. What else is there for either of them to do? Ask questions. Stand by. The actors in an event have nothing at all to do with what is done. Causeless consequences. A car with no driver hurries on no road.

22 March 2007
It didn’t have anything to do with sex or children or desire. The man who led a double life just wanted to be a different man.

22 March 2007