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All the chances of.
And then another,
sweeping out the street
and not worrying.
Always sell the future
for the past, you’re safe
on the curbstone
in between. Between
gutter and commerce
a man stands free.
The common shore.
The possibility of now.

22 March 2007
It’s not hard to press the crimson button
it’s just hard to know what it will make happen
always imagining that one thing leads to another
but how can we be sure, does the flag
make the wind that flaps it thus proving
to a man indoors a block away that indeed
the wind is speaking? Or like the golden
screw in the joke people were always telling
at a certain hour of the night, what might
happen if you unscrew it, they used to burn
the flag to irritate the government, bad move
I thought since we had more right to it
than any short-lived administration had,
we are the real Americans, all of us,
we should have shoved the flag in their faces
if they had them, if they weren’t just
smirks in suits. Last blowjob in Saigon,
they used to have a subway in Baghdad.
Many an amenity left at the side of the road.

22 March 2007
Nobody’s birthday happens today.
There is a silence round the pericardium
like a stroke waiting to happen
upstairs where such things do, a glimpse
from the bone cliffs, then sundown
sudden as a clam. Why not, if
they can be happy they can be quick.
Memories can fade, spiritual counsel
fail. On the slightly shabby seventh
green three priests are playing through.
Numbers and things, the twin tribes
of what we know. Gods, both of them.
Rivals, squabbling we hear next door.
Divide and. I keep looking in my wallet
for that $2 bill the leper passed
in Washington D.C. to terrify senators
—it should have reached me by now
but so many things get lost in the mail.

23 March 2007
What would happen if I let him be me?
Violins? Discordant colors squeezed out of their tubes to lie alongside one another uncomfortably, penguin in the jungle, a man with no hat?
Could it just be that, an absence where customs demands presence,
a mere incivility raised to a cosmology like Marx on a bad day at the Museum?
What can I do with this identity?
I keep trying to make people happy—it’s like building the roof before the house.
Sometimes there’s no right way to do things.

23 March 2007
MARTYR TO MATRIMONY

If I may mention it again, you
knew full well at the time, that
you were marrying an idealist
and philosopher!

-- Amos Hoople, 1927

There isn’t always a plunger in the fountain pen
and sometimes the ink-sac has dried out.
Dried old boiled stringbean stiff behind the couch.
The dog did it? There is no direct flight between
the capitals of Canada and the United States,
isn’t that interesting? Sometimes you never know.
Things that you expect unaccountably elude
their legendary destination, cup and lip, notorious
for the slippages between. Or so says Rilke
in that century’s most beautiful poem, if I may.
I was born back then, and know it. Most of you
were too, but came clueless to the new
as usual, millennium, manifesto, runway in Milan.
The sparrows have scattered what little wit I had,
watching them rugby round the fallen seed
below the squirrel-proof feeder. Fat chance.
Christian Lacroix’s spring line is something else,
like a bunch of hollyhocks rushing towards me
with lust in their fluffy hearts. And music
from Estonia on the internet, mewing
strange noises the announcers make, how coarse
I must sound to them. But nobody’s listening,
just this endless music. I stretch out here
on the daybed and wait for the end to come.
It starts as a corn or callus and before you know it
the priest is at your elbow smearing you
with nice-smelling oils and ashes. More mewing.
Only this time it’s your native language
that you get to hear one final time.
After some time (30 min) light yellow solid formed. Heating stopped.
-- Linus Pauling, observations, September 24, 1935

So that’s all it was. One came
into the world a few minutes later,
warm enough, naturally
scientifically even, greedy
for that solidity one takes for gold.
Everything that glisters, is.
Or amber, yellow sapphire like the one
he sports now on the pointing finger,
or citrine that makes women wealthy,
or chalky sulfur from Sicilian mines
pure yellow. Heating stopped
and breathing began. Orpiment.
Pyrites. The double yellow line
down every consequential road.
Follow the color, said he to himself,
I will I said, and he did and here
the several of them are, sulfurous,
aureate, yellow-livered, scared.
After some time, all Paris will be
terrified. Thirty minutes later
our rescuer will come, taking
for the occasion the form of a big
yellow angel strewing coins
from a yellow dogs skin satchel.
We pick up the gold and follow,
isn’t that a river, a church, isn’t
that Franck organ music, aren’t we
the ones we thought we were,
born of woman, in a bed someplace,
on a day or in the night time hour
with numbers all over, haven’t we
in some way become part of it all,
whatever it turns out to be, or
have been by the time we leave it
if we ever do, if there really is
an out built into the system.
Sages have doubted it for ages.

23 March 2007
Another possibility is that thanks to very gradual inspissation in the presence of proportionally augmenting quantities of atmospheric oxygen the stuff gets thicker the taste changes so by the time we have come to the bottom of the flask and open another the fresh one tastes entirely different, thinner, less concentrated. We think we have been deceived as usual by the merchants. But how will we ever know?

24 March 2007
L’HEURE BLEUE

Things that seem to be waiting for us
to turn our backs and then they’re here
not necessarily pouncing but definitely
here, weather is like that, or light, or even
when the light goes away the curious
emptyish music of light’s absence
thrills us like a perfume when
we’re not even sure if we like women
or that kind of woman or anybody at all.
Bodies are much too mysterious for us,
we’re waiting for some simpler condition
as presented in hymnbooks and cartoons
when we waft around leaving harp hum
all round us as we move, and say
wise things and prance among clouds.
A body is a terrible weight to carry
on into evening, alone or with others,
nimble or not, just the weight of need,
let alone want, let desire, let alone shame.
Soon we’re sitting at a little table
almost alone with our guilt, with only
a transparent spouse or lover to distract.
A glass or cup stands before us, and yes.
MUSIC FROM FRANCE

Always the excuses, the uses
of things to waylay other things,
a pirate ship skipping on the pond.

And there you squat, controlling
destiny again. It’s all in you,
all ready to come out and be world.

Salvo after salvo the little ships
contend. Suspended in your attention.

They have come here from far countries
to amuse you, stop collecting stamps
and pay attention. They are in you
ever, trying to come out. Only your mind,
that wretched little sieve, gets clogged
and keeps them out. Let mind loose.

Be flume. Flush. *La Création du Monde*
is on the radio even as you speak.
And surely a man like that would know.

24 March 2007
BARON OCHS TAKES THE LAST TRICK

Isn’t it time not to wonder what the authorities are up to? Time to let the government stew in its own…well, not juice, maybe turned milk, tainted wine. Time to let them be, and move on to the real politics, you and me. The each of other, like a special card that trumps all the rest. All civilization (call it Democracy if you must, depends more on the shape of your mouth, what you say) begins right here. You and me. And then some. The Declaration of Dependence is what we need all these years. When you’re with me no night will ever seem too long.

24 March 2007


COUVADE

the husband squats
goes through
the incandescences of childbirth

must make the pain up for himself
must yield
something into daylight

what comes from all
what comes from any suffering
a twisted knee

a squalling memory.

25 March 2007
THE ANNUNCIATION AGAIN

Stalwart, like a merchant from the Yemen crossing the Hadramawt on foot, carrying one particular jewel, like no other in the world, say a twi-natured alexandrite of immense size, emerald in one light amethyst in other, worth a fortune, snug in his pocket, needing no camels, enduring the thirsts of that strange country flesh-colored rocks burn in sun and no water for a thousand years to get to the narrow straits of sea where one city is where someone waits he has in mind to offer this stone to he comes down through the parching air half-choked with the musics of desire all round him, gasping at this world embedded in the agony of nature to spill his single piece of news, how far he has to go to make her hear, impatient for her answer, but not daring just this once to hurry her, or hurry anything. This has to be done just right, no room for anything but everything. Her narrow waist. The fertile doubt in which he has plowed his information. Quivering of light, restless birds flustered at the window. No glass. No feigned transparency. A thing that is just exactly what it is.

25 March 2007
A smattering of snow
left to understand

pronounless, the parsers.
Fretting hemlock bark
an animal. Fresh

green spikes – crocus
rising. Walking around

cold encyclopedia.

25 March 2007
A TRIO BY KHATCHATURIAN

Walking pain home
With much expression
Walking under the wagon
Rubbing your back on a cloud

*

It’s so happy to be happy again
It wears black and has insides
Muscles gleam sun
Far away a sheep summons her shepherd

*

Market manners
Cold hands of spring
You can hear a brothel
A block away, the piano,
The sudden silence, the single
Startled cry

*

Everything sounds as if people
Said it out loud
Distinctly in their sleep.

25 March 2007 (Olin)
Gesetzlich

according to the law
or law,
    a word
out of the St Mark’s Passion

spoken on the tone:
    recitative. Then the chorus.

Playing the role of the congregation
we praise God.
We are astonished at Jesus’s healings.
We say Crucify him!
We hymn Him to death.

We are the chorus,
we are the responsible ones.
Gesetzlich, the law
and its book
from which we come.

No original sin except Being itself.

man ist selbst schuld, says Bernhard,
everything is your fault,
one is guilty just by being.

The law restores us
to our terrible places.

The passion according to Saint Mark
performed on the 23rd of March 1731
and lost. Reconstructed in our days
from the meters alone.

We wear what fits. We sing
what we have heard sung.
Recycled melody. Brave musicologist signs Bach’s name to the chorale.

The chorus
the unforgivable consensus,
it is we who made things as they are

and maybe we did the best we could make from a leper world, a stone supper, dead water and a hawk,

a hawk who is the closest bird to heaven, a hawk cries.

25 March 2007
woman night stuff

he’d carry out every morning from the office, Empire State Building, small suite looking north, west.

not supposed to be there overnight, or be ok, but not sleep, not live, who was she, not always the same.

one was this: with her lined face held bravely to my camera, told about her brother who was ‘cut out’ for the murder of a Chicago policeman, or was it priest, a murder that on the witness stand he claimed he couldn’t remember:

“one man is much like another,” he said, and began to cry.

26 March 2007
[dreamt]
OLD TIMES IN SING-SING

Warden watching the movie goes on
giving the incarcerated fresh ideas.
Often a priest waits in the shadows,
jolly-jowled, appallingly Irish, oily
with empathy. You wonder why
men about to die bother with Confession
since they’re on the way to the one
place (in theory) where everything is
already known. Heaven is knowing.
But here they are, whispering in corners,
moping down endless corridors that
do all at once come to an end. The door.
The chamber. Great pause. The lights
flicker. The movie ends. The movie
still goes on, nothing ends, when one
man dies we all die, we fry with him
in the chair, suck in the gas, endure
the hangman’s last caress. All
the deaths are dying as we speak.
Christ is still on his cross forever
and Bruno still a torch on Flower Field
and this little tiny life we play with
is somebody else’s death.

26 March 2007
Someone else’s anything,
A hurricane in memory.
A stalwart cross. Crimp.
Category. Kant
recited in Jerusalem
by Eichmann. The end.

27 March 2007
Elegant as spores
the ideas of a good century
recur. Proliferate.
A pretty lady from a balloon
showers her citizens with poetry.
Terza rima slithers through the surf.
Abandon me, all ye who entered me.

27 March 2007
Too nervous to be long.
To belong.
Hawk in spring
high
from sky west to sky east
across the whole temple
never once flapping his wings.

27 III 07