That will be waiting
like ink in a pen
quiet own agenda own
sense of weather

Things dry out light
up again batteries
lingerie a crow
insists try
to understand

Listen harder
it’s all that can be done
put clothes on
for other people.

1 July 2000
Things dedicatedall
    lawn serene
remember dying
you not yet you
everything that you lose
becomes you
strong as they go
gone a drunken
ferryboat
long time crossing
to where you began.

1 July 2000
Morningolatry
Morgan at her marriage
sleek with unremembering

a trowel

    piece this day
    together sandman

dream it to life
bluespanked spilling sky

ever
morningbreath breath.

1 July 2000
Argumentum ornithologicum, II

_for Borges_

Dear goldfinch on my feeder so afraid, don’t you know
I’m keeping watch for you?

You eat so nervously — looking anxiously this (eat) way (eat) that way.

But you’re wise, you know I can’t keep an eye on you all day and all night,

you’re just a momentary interest of mine

whereas there must be someone whose eye is on you all the time.

1 July 2000
BAD ARIA

Deer muck. Musk. Tracks
or traces after gone
game, the smell of evidence
thick grass slept down smooth
flat a sperm smell air fever

moving from infection to infection
all that is to investigate
is the transmission
the tradition of being sick

whaler doldrum’d spun
webs of spindrift on
and all of them shake

ague finds the body
well furnished theater
for its improvisations.

1 July 2000
No one ever for a moment
would think this an actual
statement someone is making
from the bottom of his heart
to you. Hearts have no bottom.
Sequences of glass thermometers
valves opening and closing
(Latin word for door, panes of a
door), an echo antiphoned
from chamber to chamber till
the original word (if ever
there was one) is lost, lost

in the din of desire. Blood
in other words, blood. If only
you could let the words go
free of origin, loosed from occasion

and follow them, really humbly,
eyes fixed on their tails
to watch where they go
and how they get there,

you would know what you mean.
You wouldn’t know everything
but you’d know everything
the world knows how to know.

1 July 2000
Writing is being told
thinking is listening
and being is thinking
about you.

1 July 2000
SPREEBRÜCKE

Call to the improper
down by the canal
the way they bend
bridges over it
how hard the traffic
mornings in gulls
speaking their piece
of course the terror
of a candle things
like other things.

1 July 2000
Be half, be dread,  
moon roof agape  
to give the stars a chance

to know your head  
beating down thereon  
the way Daniel’s finger  
scribbled on the wall

for him to interpret  
all day long stars  
are over you you  
never see them they  
see you  
they plunge  
the Arabian daggers  
of their meanings  
into your head  
each one  
following the sulcus  
between your hemispheres

for stars like any  
absolute are fair  
even scrupulous

they pour in  
through the foramen  
with your first breath

and for hours after  
you think you’re thinking.

1 July 2000
THE MEANS

The last few days I’ve been writing with ink I made from coffee, using dark vinegar as mordant. It writes a lovely sepia reasonably permanent. I addressed experimentally an envelope to an imaginary woman and floated in in a bowl of water, rubbed it, let it dry and she still was there, her name, her little house perfectly clear. Serene at evening in a little town west of my in-laws and north of the Pope, named for a Roman god (the town, not the woman) of utterance and war.

2 July 2000
Celan may not be the only poet.
But you’d never know it.

2 July 2000
Where is blue when I need it
color of memory and oblivion
complementary bien sûr of daylight’s yellow?

The sky is blue
to remind us of the night
where things come true

the dark we come from and we go.

2 July 2000
Bring me back pens from Arabia
steel nibs just slightly oblique
and narrow, meant for inscribing
an alphabet that is always flowing,
rising and falling, waves of the sea,
only ocean those deserts have.

2 July 2000
SPHINXES

La liseuse the
reading woman
outstretched
on a chaste bed

belly in contact
with mattress
bed-frame floor
foundation
topsoil bedrock
earth’s core

Everything that
naturally is

and everything
we’ve made
together or apart
now flows
up into her
she reads

2.
she is abandoned
to a world
that speaks

her body focus
a sheaf of words
some actual mouth
pronounced once
onto the wheat field
of the paper

3.
sometimes reading
is like kissing
sometimes lying
down is like standing
up running hard
across the desert
to keep pace
with the fixed stars
so when her speed
matches theirs she
is suddenly still
lying there calmly
stretched out at ease
propped on her elbows
studying a book

4.
or just dreaming it.
Why can’t I see
the words she’s reading?
Why can’t I be
her body, her eyes
and everything they see,
why can’t I share
this window out
this window she is
she has spread
a doorway out
a door of light
on the counterpane
what does she see
when she looks down
through the lines of type
those dunes
of other people’s meanings
that have to become hers
stretching before her,
below her?
What does she see
while I’m watching?

5.
Eventually she looks up
her eyes half there half here —
it takes a little while to be where you are.

Would she see me the way I really am,
a man lost in the forest of a book
she has to find, has to rescue

following the line of sight, his eyes
following the contours of her body
the contours of the world?

6.
Better not look up.
Two separate universes
the beholder and the beheld
sometimes for a moment
the trembling of the veil
they seem to be the same.
She sees me seeing her,
I see the place she investigates
with all her heart and mind
just by being there
dreaming stories into a book.
Where our lines of sight meet.
For a second we are the same.

2 July 2000
WHY EVERYTHING IS WRONG

I slept when I should have kept vigil,
ate when I should have gone hungry,
loved when I should have waited.
Yet every single month the
strange moon flaps its virgin wings.

2 July 2000
This is the secret of the Tarot:

There is no empty card.
No quality that does not
in its own moment rule the world.

2 July 2000
REMINISCENCES OF DUN LAOGHAIRE

Come tingling the machine
flings — colors — up from the pool
your holy member vibrates
to belong to such society

we all have some
inappropriate nuclear devices
a lawn mower a postage stamp
choose things easy to translate
into Chinese the rabbit hurries

to enlist in the caverns of the earth
the body mass of every species
compute the slim remainder: the girl
from the Canary Islands

but it is finally about all of us, the air
breathing walkarounders, mouth

full of something to say, no matter
how dumb, we have come.

3 July 2000
A TRACK BEFOULED BY CATTLE

(from Waugh, “Bella Fleace”)

As if her eminence The Sphinx
had made her way there, wetting
at every step, pouring out the long
closeted humors her gypsy desert
would have none of, here she is
puddling up the douce green hillock
to rest at length on her tummy high
above our seedy respectabilities
bare-backed proud-elbowed gaze
fixed on every man jack of us
forever. What a sphinx does is read us.

She is the symbol of a mind bent
forward on the wave-front of a book,
a word floats in, lost in Ireland,
found in Oregon, countries beige
with vowel sounds, we begin and begin.
Teach us to read water. To find
the door between the tideline and the sea.

3 July 2000
Lightning bugs we called them not fireflies. There’s one now on the porch screen emitting green phosphor in good measure. Things light up when they see us. Everything is a dog. Most of them are innocent, the decent wolf mind not all bred out, stones, shells, ores, appetites. They dance affinities till the end of time. These all try to take the tango we learned from them, things, back into the Grail spaces, spiritual places, losses, sudden blazes of remembering you.

3 July 2000