
Something in the Air

Tom Clark

SHEARSMAN BOOKS LTD.

2010

First published in the United Kingdom in 2010 by
Shearsman Books Ltd
58 Velwell Road
Exeter EX4 4LD

www.shearsman.com

ISBN 978-1-84861-108-5
First Edition

Copyright © Tom Clark 2010.

The right of Tom Clark to be identified as the author of this work
has been asserted by him in accordance with the Copyrights,
Designs and Patents Act of 1988. All rights reserved.

Cover photo: *Something in the Air*,
copyright ©2010 by Cristina Bozzoli

Book Design: George Mattingly at GMD, Berkeley, California

Some of these poems first appeared in *The Argotist*,
House Organ, *Jacket* and *The Poetry Project Newsletter*.

"After Wang Wei," "5 P.M.," "January," "September," and
"Pink Trees" first appeared as Viking Dog Press broadsides.

"A free market wonder...," "Aqualung," "Blur/ Lens," "Club Sahara,"
"De Ira Dei," "Moirra, or Fate," "Single," "What Is That Bright Star Next to the
Moon Tonight" and "'Who needs Apollo...'" (with *Ted Berrigan*)
first appeared in *Single*, a Longhouse foldout.

Contents

- Something in the Air • 1
- Blur / Lens • 2
- Multiple Screen Window Display • 3
- To A Certain Friend • 4
- Expansion • 5
- Every Day • 6
- Little Cantos • 9
- Whistle Buoy • 11
- In the Dark Mountains, Brilliant • 12
- Eldora • 13
- Sequoias • 14
- Dreams of the Blue Morpho • 15
- Beautiful Thing • 17
- Collection • 18
- Up the Creek • 20
- Momentary Visitor • 21
- Hope • 22
- Musing • 23
- Lecture • 24
- Aporia • 25
- Nights at Sea • 26
- “This diminishing of things...” • 27
- Sweet Peas • 28
- Walking Out • 29
- Solarity • 30
- One Morning in December • 31

The Riddle • 33
View • 34
Greed • 35
Ideology • 36
“A free market wonder...” • 37
“Meant to be...” • 38
Paradiso Terrestre • 39
Small Change • 41
Single • 42
Loop • 43
Bliss • 44
The Movies as Natural History • 46
An Unnoticeable Star • 47
Postconceptualism • 49
1968 • 50
“Walked into state...” • 51
Aqualung • 52
September • 53
January • 54
All Souls • 55
Elephant Cemetery • 56
Ancestors • 57
Thinking About George • 58
Scenes Along the Road • 59
Where Is the House of My Friend? • 60
The Shadows • 62
Origin of the Speechless • 63
The X of the Unknown • 64
Talk Gets Old • 65
Comic Interpretation • 66
The Lake • 67
Club Sahara • 68
Three Easy Pieces • 69

Twisted • 71
Sedge • 72
The Pharaohs Sacrifice Themselves
 Before Her • 73
Time • 74
Moirai, or Fate • 75
“A point is fixed...” • 76
“In this river...” • 77
“Because they are desiring...” • 78
Meditation • 79
Tunnel • 80
Palafito • 81
Motion, 1953 • 82
5 P.M. • 83
Pink Trees • 84
Blue Spring • 85
After Wang Wei • 86
The Nightingale • 87
Keats on Shipboard, September 1820 • 88
Hans Bellmer • 89
Friedrich’s Dream • 90
Caspar David Friedrich and the Interior
 Dictation of Landscape • 91
Heaven Up Here • 93
Witnesses • 95
The Practice of Painting • 96
An Echo of Time • 97
Slow Life (for Joseph Cornell) • 98
Southern Cross (to Giuseppe Ungaretti) • 99
“Who needs Apollo...”
 (with Ted Berrigan) • 102
What Is That Bright Star Next to the Moon
 Tonight? • 103

Andromeda • 104
De Ira Dei • 105
Anyone There? • 106
Crepuscular • 107
White Moon • 108
Survey Research • 109
Contraction • 110
Glassitude • 111
Entertainment Medium • 112
The Self-Unseeing • 113
Mnemonic • 114

Something in the Air:

 statement on the poems • 115
Biographical note: Tom Clark • 116
Poetry Books by Tom Clark • 117

Something in the Air

The identity sign
held Wittgenstein
is a lie

Some kind of
dust or
pollen in the air,

falling,

a light cloud
drifting
earthward—

“I”s blurred
memorial
dispersing into

several
unsorted
particulates

Blur / Lens

The "I" and the eye
A glass for seeing
Always cloudy
The days go by
The world spins round
The subject is always moving
The mind can't keep up
It's all a blur
The eye and the "I"
A glass for seeing
Always cloudy

Every two hours I wipe off my glasses

Multiple Screen Window Display

Like so many tiny pixie tv's
Flashing messages to each other all night
The hundred billion neurons in your brain
Replace identity as such with deep
Cosmic gossip while your body's arrested
in mid flight back toward an old savannah –
A hundred billion neurons seeking shelter,
Losing that deep self because you're asleep,
Lost in your dreams, a functional state
Of your brain lapsing into disappearance,
Your brain not bothering to compute you,
Your sense of who you are going up in smoke,
Though if the soul be several not one
There's only now and that now has presence.

To A Certain Friend

Presence comes before everything, even before being
The you to whom everything once belonged
If by everything one means the fullness of nature's beauty
You must remember now that much has been taken from you
Grief too will go from you as from sorrowing songs
Sorrow goes, leaving nothing for you after a while
But the memory of the melody, some old familiar tune
That's lingered on long past the moment you first sailed
Gracefully into the room, as if all the modern languages
Were coming down to me so that I could say these things

Expansion

Distribution of moments.
Memory. Attention. Expectation.
A light plane, a feathery piano
Solo. The time of everyone
In the world comes apart
In pieces, a slow quiet
Dispersal. The poppies are still
Furled into themselves
Chilled morning maidens
But the musky red antique
Geranium droops open as
Do some purple blue
Unnamables whose scroll
Unravels backward like Arabic.

Every Day

Grammar tells us
what kind of an object
anything is. So does light.

“Thought
is surrounded
by a halo...”

You can feel yourself thinking
but can you think yourself feeling?

A state of what?

“You’re a smarty pants
do you want to dance?”

Touch is important
in a dark universe,
but print is useless
much less unreal

Mechanical Tao

The robot pushes small obstacles out of the
way, goes around heavy ones, and avoids slopes.

The BIG crayon
for little fingers

Where is it written
that we must write
right side up?

Advantage—
ah, it stays with us
past the asking

Are we
some kind
of filter, some
diode
it's all being
run through?

I am here with this (my mind, etc.)
“I am not here with my mind”

Learning to forget
occurring in the instant,
uneasily wise
& so, poorly aware
Space isn't
in Language—
or as the child cries
“Outside! Outside!”

I walk in
on occasion

One room fronts on
open, unqualified spaces.
The other is bound
by a wall. All its
area is thought up.

mind
lines

Around
nouns
people are
nervous,
possessive

People on television
give you their
public self
like people
on elevators

“What has the greatest importance
is not the twelve tones, but,
much more, the serial conception...”

More hair
Every
Day

Little Cantos

1

orange harmonies
bubbles resonant open
literal yarn beans electricity
chatter angels

people
atrophy dream
tears leafy eddying
faraway buzz
planes above
jets

seashell
membrane

starlight octaves
oscillating breakfast
hemoglobin
woodchuck

Strawberry
Nymph
throne

2

garden starfield food
bugs

thermostat trick indigo
white universe

cirrus slabs zone benzene
parachute
verbena
library
chronometry
Nahuatl
bumblebee

sunfish mesas
shampoo
diatoms fly

purple
phonemes
yellow-orange
bobbin corona newspaper song