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THE ARGUMENT FROM THE DRANSE

The Dranse is a river. It is an old word in the Savoy language, sister to our word drench; it means a torrent down the mountain, a torrent is a flood that the rocks control. Shaped by the rocks it shapes, a mountain torrent is the perfect reciprocal gesture, a word among things, fluent and responsive, carving out by passing by. It is a fleeting gesture that changes eternities, a mark elapsing that leaves behind hard meanings where it passes.

[The poem begins on Saturday, 7 August 2004, in La Borne.]

Not lost too much
tooth the touch of
tender in the fine
a fork among friends

O salt to love who
after hamamelis
lit the whistle
hard on its going down

a gong for spraddle
or butter a mother
be care, keel, any
anyboat you see

smell of kerosene
making sense green
a furber or a foal
wagtail on 2 lawns

slow grade up cliff
startling chough clouds
limestone patter of sunshine
organdy pear rock

pine lime chalk calvaire
watch satellite sputum
gel on monitor stickum
explain to the pharmacist

don't smoke lobelia
not catering blue pipit
oblige wooden guest
palace union semaphore

means always carrying
overanxious psyllium
protractor's narrative
circular newspaper

what was said is neophyte
it bleached pleadings
of foreign capital embedded
in domestic cleavage

alternate with druidry
take to the sea scum
sloshed ankles of a Thalassite

proncer & the period

magnesium epopiteia

sly words for raree

flash your popinjay theory

buster your sorebones

oneís neck is long

spirit history Oneida

sharing their SUV

a woman picks her nose

the mountains notice

canít fool them analysis

particulate chemist

waiting at hot crucible

Sumerian alphabet discovered

this is it cloud on that land

scattering wheat amazed

bone white of pearl barley

account for matter

quills release in enemy

to ink or restless

ceremonial pause

All the waits to small a get

midlight on the balcony a pax

waits a pope hand signal on the high

who do it with raised hands
 harrowing heaven every death

time to go to bread
 hill to have a horse
 cool now but the sun
 under Mont d'Évian
 we are named for what we see

Say? That too imponderable
 conversation chipping at the wall
 roughcast philosophy all the kind
 a diner on the moon a soviet
 uncertain about articles

a man the man man itself
 chelovek a preposterous guess
 this & not that or better
 butterfly bush all purple brushes
 diplomats assemble neckties and begin.

•

The ostensorium has golden censers
 hands touch everything like flies alighting
 nothing past the blue of place to gold
 the somber mountain of what happens
 down which it is to come down cloud later

second coming! river running north

cold in case a squadron of jackdaws
 measured against math resistance
 pure morality or puritan the lip of left
 never kissed the body's folds

aching for political caress
 where *does* everybody live
 there can't be fields without streams
 stream without loosestrife cows bells
 down Mont Chéry the goats stampeded

dense manifesto a creed to need
 write in one paragraph what is believed
 to be the case or who dropped the sparrow
 in the first place and who the hero the thrush
 sings to what alphabet to write that name

drenched with particulars the rocket burst
 fireflowers over the limestone lake the folk
 hurry up the narrow road to be amazed
 sound & light as if no other where together
 only here across the clear green water rose

a touch to be as dense as history
 chance the prepositional rapture
 charlatans of sun disease
 rehearsing islands to goat farmers
 mountains are to lose in but what

Akkadian policy where it all went wrong

language used to letter laws
 write down instead what never was
 and make it be Gospel of Bethany
 the afterlife of Madeleine-Marie

language goes wrong when it records
 annals should be pictures scratched in rock
 or a church built of common stones
 mysterious basketmakers weave history in
 but writing means for pure invention

(hard for puers to have puers)
 all comes to this new next
 a fleet of uncertainties arriving
 on the morning tide no water stands
 mountain pitcher pour Aquarius

no strange vocabulary apple
 red fish green shadow hill
 hill habit slipside after
 cunning rede-motes of old never
 a spill of milk a spunk of flame

eunoterus or scrabalost no not
 those radio all words are strange
 in a foreign country lose all subtlety
 that usually marks the delight of speaking
 now just coarse where is this and when and how

and otherwise the spirits of the flowers
 make the breeze that lifts the blue over
 quoting Wordspear and Lakesworth too often
 bramble bush here and a gorse over there
 where the sheep's shadow climbs the hill

the herd corners after spiral path
 chronometer built in stone and guess the sun
 falters through the autumn gate to make born
 who would do own faltering later coin by coin
 until the green girl walked along the brick

which is the Greek for river where the girl
 recumbent yet advancing swoon by swoon
 enkindles amity among the moths our mothers
 every creature was in time or will be
 by virtue of that virtue held in heart wax

from the blond beehive achieve
 intoxicating liberal magazines copper shells
 to go to war with the priest and his cycle
 when the wind dies down and every straw relaxes
 pelargonium and lavender sun behind the hill

life is a valley it really wants to tell
 the whole story now thunder on the mountain
 rain spits a flower wet a pink one
 and nobody knows the crest of Mont diEvian
 in sunshine still and elsewhere *nubibus*

colles celentur or pick the flower
 and have done with it a pharmacist
 of little wounds and wonders iwho
 lit the light?î no one but color is
 so color has to do the work of heroes

slumbering inside the wooden horse in Cernagora
 the plump girl in blonde wig is Helena
 o peruke of falsity a cock crows also
 just before dark like Hegelís owl
 which had overflown these battlements

gold or no gold to tell the story
 whole but name no names ipure
 inventionî maligned by whose inferiors
 temporary heartbreak and bus downhill
 until the soldiers see the lake and cry

armistice of motives is a kind despot
 a blue entitlement the theorist says
 but others plead the Justinian excuse
 one must rule the world to answer heaven
 or build a sky that answers to his name

nobody needier than neat the Greeks knew
 woodcarved language of the logothete
 polychromed by famous men to kill a bear
 or bring a Bulgar home all love is pain

incessantly consented to the sand is wet

the blood of virgins saturates the books
 thought Commedia dell'arte practical wise
 a turngrip shaped like a crucifix
 lets the tyres change from wheel to wheel
 all love falters the same circle describe the street

fall to its knees and not for prayer but work
 between the virgin and the guava fruit
 whose lake is thick with tule reeds the wind
 chatters them together sticks on sticks on necks
 to wake all things then meditator from his dreams

+++

thunder but no rain hear her voice *thunderbird*
 but see no face it all is mountain
 limestone religion two girls petanque
 toss underhand the iron balls chop the jack away
 all the mystic gates are closed by music

+++

the incendiary difference like a goat
 calling to its mother on the hill a sprawl
 of udders down the cliff and some high houses
 oak castaways along the cloud road rapture
 is it or time to begin screwdriver

hungry for the hard Christians here are dragons

here hard money drives a tan chalet up rock
 and the keen scatterers of destiny girl by girl
 petanque in the church's shadow Saint Guerin
 Pray For Us who smooth the stone in place
 with such amazing effort that nothing shows
 just a furry cat waiting on the wall

say nothing lest it turn to gold the baker's wall
 so bryophyted and vascular green too
 the stolid amazements of what no one makes happen
 trip by submarine through the green rhizomes
 of the mind's valley where naught is where it should be
 among the weltering artisans of local numbers

it is to live for other people that is all
 interrupted by it never rained the headlight
 explains the empty road too many particles
 to call it mist alone or angry molecules
 or barbara celarent where the teacher
 turns his back at last on all the words

and when the words are gone the god is gone
 Saint Antoine d'Egypte shown with a pig
 borrowed from another Anthony or lent to him
 which way does borrow go imprint a's
 object on b's use of it or other way in
 bells remind the empty church of all it's lost

all the people who will never come again
 and kiss the pig or beg the saint's protection
 against the usufruct of dream the hectic
 dreamlife of moral personages lost in stucco
 only in graffiti to recollect at last the icon
 that spreads wide the mountain of remember

be small with ceremony the old pews creak
 old jug for the spirit to take comfort in
 be housed in mutter the worst take shape
 zygotes of influence and plasma of remorse
 till finally nothing final even speaks why should it
 sumac drupes as red here as in Algonquia

+++

make more fit in everything too loose
 make it tight and turbulent entablature
 of a temple to an absent god or just the priests
 are gone the god let loose is fire to roam
 glad among kayakers and a prayer for rain

turn free by road assemblymen of hell
 who caught this town before the avalanche
 and made the tourists come to feed the goats
 and the cows' transhumances are green with love
 all the occasional shadow kiss tastes of September

turning round to come in all the bitter

we need more salt the angelus begins
 who kneels down among the ruins of a strange idea
 came down from heaven reek of iodine
 and everything looks small today

like staring into the chalice of a flower
 mutations of large corporations compete
 with natural decay to isolate tragedy from news
 a blue feather floats into a street in Geneva
 the lake spumes a jet of counseled air

so high as if somebody was saying something
 three dogs in concert here like crystal goblets chinking
 it is as if the coast were really edifice and opal
 exalted voices of the children
 spending their penny in the willows

lead down by tile the rain-smart roof
 magpies many and an old man on a horse
 clops through the town no turns to two
 a couple feed their mounts on neighbor grass
 between this life and the bishop

or how Saint Guerin must pray for all
 ox and ass and Antoine's pig and not till
 well into *La Captive* does the author get a name
 given by the beloved the provisional
 the sole determinatrix of local actuality

who says 'mon cher Marcel' or some such
 formula memory will not retain (*nous lépreux,*
Paris se vaut une messe) all the famous jabber
 the mantle of this rock earth has so long
 endured names sweet as melons from Cavaillon

the perplexing simplicities of Doctor K
 she's reading *So what is that bird there?*
 open to a pretty magpie half by half
 black and white old Feirefiz the sun
 of Gahmuret was divvied up like one of these

his lower parts a natural heathen white
 only the intelligence can sin age of reason
 in this season Guerin busy with sick cows
 the peasants cured the saint of wicked intellect
 and made him a patron saint of sick animals

well did they know that the body cures the mind
 the body builds the stone that puts the point of god
 high in the mountain air only the body is pure
 who can do no evil or at most be guilty
 of carnal inefficiency or dwindled milk o road of milk

that leads through Spain by Santiago on to Wales
 where Silver Road's palace hits the sky
 the stars are her footmen and the clouds
 her gonfalons unfurled above the sleeping
 personage whose error is in the name inscribed

+++

melon seeds return to compost heap
 wasps are always near too many names
 swimming pool the different shapes of men
 meme taille et meme allure of these
 simple hearted merchants of romance

wash in dragon's blood and sleep below water
 because only that one can whose life
 is so constrained by verbal sinews it
 might as well be immortal and it is
 the way a rock is always too busy to die

the long identities the place called Throat
 of the Devil where cyclamens are growing
 on the soaked wall of the ravine the name
 repeats itself in visitors who hurry home
 cherishing the word cyclamen cherishing the devil

whose rocky body they walked inside
 whose only body is their body
 wind comes down the valley hard
 every place is a body inside a body every
 body is wide open to invaders

chattering Flemish in the supermarket
 clash of chariots and melon reek
 subtract a wagtail from a pine tree
 butterfly swooping on the glacier the time

of things is scribbled deep inside

each one alone and none to wait for kindness
 is all here and afterwards the farmers
 scratch it out of the ground and make room for new
 or where would the car go if the road
 didn't differ with the mountain breathing

firelily they call it all around the town
 be careful of eternity the foam
 makes the fingers shake like a walk uphill
 in evening sunhaze down La Terche
 distance is chimera anyhow a plow

to furrow sky with and plant such wheat
 as grows to spring night with fierce little
 lights in whose gleam nothing but themselves alone
 light that just illuminates itself we pray to dark
 to augment the instrument of stars loro influenza

to have by these need-nights a void
 pronounced upon the Manifold or pleroma
 while equilibriums of ordinary passions
 totter to war the animal that tries
 to answer every question with its teeth

a kenning for it or a darling coal measures
 shouldering beneath the Yorkshire lies
 seven hundred years to put the language out
 and then the miners come in white silk scarves

in sooty tweed jackets solemn saying nought

it has to tell everything or else believe
 because telling is a cure for understanding so
 when every word is spoken all the things are gone
 and the game plays itself beneath the apple tree
 the steel balls arc and clatter down and women laugh

+++

want to hide out from the jumbo jets up here
 class struggle and theology and find instead by skin
 a morality of leaf and bark academy of stone
 spent so much time walking on the mezzanine
 among those has-been lights men call the stars
 the girl next door was one of those pale Russky charmers
 eating in the lap of Lenin till the conversation banked
 smokeless fire of the shivaree everybody got married
 and no one came it is the rutabaga principle a head
 made of wood and eyes made of all that's been lost

a woman on a ferris wheel a champion of pain
 o black Mercedes mother of all living course my street
 barricades of torpor and a strange lake-dwelling fish
 as if an eel caught philosophy and understood its practice
 as universal doctrine not just its own long way home

home is always the next port of call among the wolves
 three quarters up the mountain and the wind
 get a receipt for the paper kiss a glacier

the shoulder's sore from all it never carried
 because the fated burden belongs to the wind

even if the servant sneaks beneath the hedge and smokes
 and the snow melts not even by the core of August
 and not a single name of tree survives in English
 the man nipped a fox's tail the tiger jumped
 hardware and liquid crystal the moon's on fire

+

nominal tower hawk on the head
 oak fence gorse hedge poor hedgehog
 flat from car the spill of autumn in the yellow air
 the car is courage and a spear and sarx

means flesh when psyche's gone to town
 and left her mirror all steamed over
 hot from her looking in it it is death
 for the soul to take a shower

Parmenides was right there's never
 just one horse the palamino up La Chaux
 clematis on porphyry lord loveliest imperium
 nobody power but the body's whim to know

to know by touch and stone remember
 to go to come to back home to tell
 these four will do and let the skin

be quiet with the language of the stone

+

rectiform crucibular investigative flop
 to sail so long down the gutter in a folded newspaper
 origami *Figaro* and out to sea among cockles
 coracles limpets brooding on Lacan
 nautilus keeps secrets in their ingrown rooms

all the strategies beasts incarnate to avoid
 the simple blossom of the every which way wind
 or greedily to snatch the air inside and keep it there
 safe from music circulation of Lady Oxygen
 cancellation of the Other and sermon for the self

mitigate a nettle wear a leek in that sombrero
 let it rain hard down the cleavage of the mountain
 gush the cosmetic parables size of a sparrow
 allure of a jay shadows in the willow trees
 weave the next millennium's religions

all subtle poetries of hoopoe and plover
 and gulls learn to fly at midnight
 and their white tidings will rouse the house
 no man will dare say their sermons for them
 and women will wake up and say their dreams

though *Introduction to the Devout Life* was written here
 if here is taken loosely cloud chambering la Tête Noire
 two horses and only two Poverty and Liberty
 broken china heaped outside old magazines
 every word has at least two meanings

and the skull lasts longer than the brain
 think on this voyagers with canoes on shoulders
 sweating through Ouisconsin portages of old
 the bone remembers in its strange fashion
 where the pudding of the flesh lets slip

our parents called us lust in idleness
 because Pontiac is cheaper than LaSalle
 and a ghost haunts only his own terrain
 humble as a bee disinclined to range
 firewardens on their towers dream Byzantium

the naked Empress comes to everyone who sleeps
 head of a monkfish caught on a tree branch
 breath is a flag and the army is the skin
 watch them falter through the rye oblivion
 is a ribbon knotted round a knuckle

or comes who calls a skull is resonant
 clear and clean is empty and a wind issueth
 which tells all the wit this bone once held
 Merlin or Mandeville a woman who knew all
 and poured her slim pitcher on the table

milk of all known valleys the precious molds
 make cheeses but the skull has two horns on it
 or six or four and the horns are hollow howl
 at sacred instances when priests think godwind blows
 and they blow back to answer mystery with reverence

the faces face each other it is marble
 each woman is a plausible envoy of her kind
 a plenipotent just arrived from the archaic
 one sees this face a lot in dreams and ten
 thousand years ago saw in their sleep too

mother of magnesium sea wife temptress
 the air's vestal around her but she magnifies
 all occasions are the sun of time all space is touch
 all seeing is an anger of the eyes to choke the distances
 hardware of her hours gondola down the blood stream

always so much singing passes in profile
 we know this nose this hurry because a sky
 falls into place around such angular momentum
 thought it was a woman's face in twilight seen
 hurrying towards the harbor when black sails come

cloud come along come along high head silver blue
 pirate sky with dory cloud down here invading pines
 describe alternate universe where all the strings
 uncoil at once and quarks are his and hers at last

duality is our unity brother humans who leave behind

look up the names of things have you by the neck
 or choke your prayers with kisses left from dream
 the alternative to obvious is everything
 the alternative to everything is not nothing is the one
 thing permanent as the attention paid to it

come along donkey bray a buddy understands
 come along rapture to tease the sleeping nun
 ivory and silverplate brushes worked with amber
 anything to keep her hair out of her eyes and let the light in
 that part of the wind the human brain can see

don't harden hearts against the felons on the gallows
 their lives' last spurt loves the world round them into place
 for nothing lasts without the urgent want of it
 screaming yesness on a migrant hopescape
 until the cat seems to stand still and let you stroke it

the angelus rings over Europe sprinters wake early
 down in Athens and wonder what Greeks eat breakfast
 after all the high school philosophy a hundred meters
 faster than anybody to make sense or naumachy
 off Nauplion how fast a shmatte drives a skiff

believe the wind it's all there is to be driven
 inside and out the first of all things and last is wind
 harsh pneumatology of a desert saint Antoine
 stoned with abstinence staggers on his crutch

god the pharmakon for vision's torments

he's made crutches of his crucifixes and a bell
 and the huffy little pig looks past his robe
 hearing the ding dong of a lost religion
 in desert stagger market stagger DAX and FTSE
 stagger Glastonbury and watermelon pine

the girl with Corsican eyes the cloud down La Chaux
 this vision lasts as long as time and then
 Parmenides was sad all going and no coming
 as if the road wrapped right back on itself
 and gold people walked along it counting seeds

all they have he thought is what they leave behind
 a measure? a moonchild? a sad trapeze
 deserted by its acrobat? every night god sends
 a little older than the television? an advocate?
 dear god what has happened to her face?

+

beyond Seytroux the same cloud the power pylons march from mist
 everything surrounds everything and it's only August the yellow
 people walk below the ground crowding upwards to the surface earth
 to be reaped like everybody else old snathe of time swung
 and who knows what or who the blade of it be old mariner

one is ages from the sea here or any maybe lake
 to milk the clouds up from or vaporette in the bloodstream

woke still feeling the wool of whose garment on his fingertips
 change road to make the horses whinny and the hinny haw
 spread the load around to balance lucency

decency? a stroke above the nine and be buried
 hear the gongulous toll bronze above the catafalque
 and the neighbor gospel lady hum in her pants suit
 priestcraft is triumphant and the church is cracked
 it's the same car coming up the mountain over and over

they go to mass and come back chemical come cured
 small rivers with thick barges hoisting home
 lock by lock the boat of it ascends sweet miracle
 to get a loaf of bread out of a mountain with the troll
 singing at his forge unalcheming all that gold

Corbá the crow Corbassière place with a lot of them
 come down from the trees and get to know you
 the dark of other people's lives the shame of living
 where so many didn't and Abbot Guarinus
 fell from his horse right there and died

nine hundred years before her right over the pommel
 the saddle fell with him some monks were mournful
 carried here him north to the abbey he had founded
 the lepers were kept up the steep path up Corba's hill
 everything intimate and sly the way death operates

Bernard hated the place but preached Jerusalem anyhow

got away as soon as he could mistakes of weather
that summer hail the size of pippins fell Crusaders left
Marlene betrothed in Canada everybody becomes opera
made of everything a cup of tea on fire in spirit sleep

the angelus woke him as if he were a village itself
but nobody is anybody really just numbers in a jar
with a few long wing feathers floating past
to make apparent identity remember palpable entity
but he had no right to talk about Parmenides

rescuing sleepy children from a burning orphanage
itself the most remarkable structure in the hamlet
they came there to ride horses and to sleep the long
sweet sweaty sleep of horses till fire found them
and no child tried to understand a few of the thoughtful

read books about the catastrophe in which they died
as if memory could be anything recovered out of nowhere
by impudent imposture of consciousness a written word
face pressed against her breast where playful dragons sleep
and every pool a wishing well they bend to read their fate

fact is fate every water's ink nothing to do with Parmenides
Rossini is closer nothing to do with anything but the Old Mill
sea marsh the Jews of this man's head and one of them uphill
stumbling rock road and what she did was dry the face
to this day she sits beside the road the napkin in her lap

an action is permanent things are not permanent
terrible history of to do and the shame of not having
a cabin full of crystals and not having a bathroom
full of sea foam and a bed full of mermaids with nacre
not having name in lights not even having lights

no name and pronouns too dear that season to make sense
Arabic easier a gesture write a whole word in the air
God made them as they did why should a priest go to Québec
and bother half-breeds and Iroquois about a soul they share
portage over thickets of indifference to the dry martini of belief

no question really asks itself it needs accomplices
buses to the lake lost mail a phone call in the night
one had not heard the donkey bray civilian light
reformation light Waldensian light down this valley once
voodoo light every heart carried that desire carries

wanting is the worst and most of magic a postcard
from a pretty city on the shores of hell
everyone arrives and no one sleeps a nightingale
singing in the emergency room blood smells like copper
copper smells like money money smells like sex

fear is general among the living that's how the dead
are different all desire and no fear not even fear
of not getting what is desired no more than a stone
can be disappointed the dead get everything
hours later ran still on the mountain the stone cross wet

+

after this comes that and after that a mulberry
 and after that the ivy hurries up the wall and children
 and so forth and the name of this is Time a hollow
 raucous teens at the foot of the same cross pray for night
 and all things cover them they are simple with fear

and where does the mountain go to flee human weather
 fear is everywhere and it loves them too *maite zaitut*
 a kind of game to play with lakes and rivers
 walking in the rain to La Moussière pursued by bells
 the natives of this little town are called 'wolves'

respectable as eggwhite like a blue policeman
 red republican procurer of indigent luxuries
 an earth to sleep on and stars for a hat
 truth is yellow truth likes to get hurt
 because then the lonely world turns opposite

and one know where one is and is not Parmenides
 who was that Parmenos he was son of
 nobody is anybody's son it's all a daughter
 a kind of island wine and kiss the sailor
 the lamb sleeps in the cottage shadow on some moss

+

nix nihil nivis umbrae on the mountain
 don't confuse a word with a preposition
 shadows on mountain statue of General Dessaix

things stand for what they are is not a proposition
a rime with calico an old woman in church

that much is clear the church was empty
the holy water stoups were dry the cooper
image of the saint is gone it's raining
no car to go home the city by the lake
where Lakota war dances get big crowds

o god the grief of sunshine sad eagle feather
the claws of what we do the broken axle
the bent wheel rolling down the arm
nobody can suffer weather like a lake
it's dreaming women wake in lightning

echo of a dance that passed one footstep into heaven
a wolf looking in from the woods so many explanations
all it really is is whatever anybody says it is isn't it
since no one's listening salvation is not susceptible
to proof or demonstration but the candle burns

kids play in the confessional rehearsing sins
they'd like to do or are doing as they speak
performing and absolving in one gesture
and the dry old wood keeps creaking
the substances of things are the only answer

who's there? the light asks who's asking
says the dark and off they go again
wind down the valley and the girl cries

shadows of snow the dawn light caught
 on the massif the breathing of the light

before the sun takes hold an hour from the world
 over the neighbor mountain a dance? a Dante?
 dark pink roses round the abandoned convent
 a sacred heart above the rose-embattled door
 and that man who shows his heart has roses too

but no one's home pull back from that knocker
 the echoes of such a house will slay the unprepared
 the men-at-arms are far away the blue lights
 of their car hurtling down the cliffside road in rain
 and one is alone with the door that one has found

+

be normal maiden samphire
 semaphore club moss ruta
 graveolens heavy-reeking rue

spinnaker stands out from Thonon
 republic at home with lakes
 les foulques come swim with us

Voughà shi no the sign says
 least chance for meaning
 all day the difference dances

wanderfrei unsalted egg
of a pastor without sheep
have fun with us it means

but no one's speaking
so nothing to know a nail
a board a brass band

chervil and leeks are close
coffee cool enough to drink
a peppermill for the pope

smooth cry willow jay
a horse just happens
a stream of travelers

vanishes in the woods
what does the eagle care
he's written his book

in splendor the darkness
sleeps inside the light
the word forgives its mouth.

7 – 13 August 2004

Saint Jean d'Aulps