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## SEEING

An electromagnetic  
catastrophe  
happens to the eye:  
it sees. It sees a woman  
standing on the bridge

victim of all it perceives.  
Doesn't have to be bridge  
woman standing  
doesn't have to wear  
a dress now red now white  
or leap over a stone fence  
or have anything to say  
in the vernacular

*every woman is a lost language  
even she can barely speak*

It could be the new moon  
or the no moon  
or mist over the church steeple

dull metal, massive, in the shape  
of the imperial crown

and a wire cross to catch the air.

17 August 2004, Montriond

## LINGUISTICS 2004

White line down middle  
of the word don't veer  
a word means what people  
think it means.

Anything else it may  
whisper to you  
is between you and God.

17 August 2004, La Borne

## GIFT OF TONGUES

People from Montriond  
(‘round mountain’)  
call it *Meurion*. People  
will say anything.

*Lindarets* high  
above the lake  
said to be Germanic  
and full of goats.

Let me heal my lip on thee,  
unfamiliar pronoun,  
my uncle called everybody this,  
Seymour the leveler,  
the *blessé de la guerre*.

17 August 2004

=====

the number of what's left  
to east or west is bounded

here comes the light from the south  
where the glaciers are

depersonalized  
light spread thin as Berlin  
over your simple arts

bite flesh, temple  
of inquiry  
given that such circumstances  
never leave you alone

17 August 2004, La Borne

=====

and that is all that saying is saying  
all the word is  
went flying  
from being certain  
to being merely snug  
in the ears of you  
vague and content and echoing  
off into silence  
no matter what some  
other distant lover thought it meant.

17 August 2004, La Borne

=====

Quitter. We used to say, don't be a.  
Another thing we used to say.  
I'll live to 140 you'll live  
forever. There is health  
and there are numbers. What do we know,  
cyclamen and mountain mist,  
scraggly pines among Persepolis.  
I know nothing but the names.  
But I still won't quit. This slow  
marathon carries me on.

17 August 2004, La Borne

=====

A star walking.

The moon dark and under the earth and far away.

The glass almost empty.

The beautiful rain.

17 VIII 04, La Borne



=====

Always starting something new

the heartless channel  
on TV, grass growing in the sun

one by one  
the stalks or stems or blades  
stiffen and relax  
in what seems to be the wind

the slim  
things young Whitman for  
some prophetic reason called Leaves,

green pages of every book to come.

17 August 2004, La Borne

## THE TEAR

Let the carriers of beginnings find  
in the core of their split logs  
no frog in a private hell but  
an image of the other side of sleep

inside of the tesseract no  
child has danced the image  
inside the actual tear that  
seeps from the miraculous icon's eye

in Russia somewhere with all the magics  
where men die in snow slush of spring thaw  
when all the belief systems lapse  
in the spring flood, glee of spring rain

waking topological remorse.  
A place I never was is terrible.  
The denial of pubis and pelvis  
of brain and middle ear

why can't I let the little world know me  
to split the stick and find the answer  
Gnostic-perfect as a leering suitor  
come to seduce me to her pleasure

a field full of people in this waterdrop.

18 August 2004, La Borne

=====

Worship things and neglect  
or autumn trees already  
red in mind the cold  
morning makes me yearn for thee  
the Balance time  
every second a transition  
and nothing fixed. Red maple.  
And yet a mountain.  
This mountain  
moves with me. Year after year.

18 August 2004, La Borne

=====

Because, the coots.

*Les foulques.* Preening at the quay.

Swans (two)

diving among the coots out there

towards the Jura

in the sun haze.

Trust the hotel, the fountain

pen, the Duchy of Savoie.

We belong to the end of the world.

Having come this far in sun

protected. The tower by the quay.

The pen that answers *I remember.*

18 August 2004

Thonon-les-Bains

=====

Sweeterings of swallows

overhead phone

lines reed mat roof

as if the tropics

terrace. Lake.

18 VIII 04, Thonon

## TOUR DES LANGUES

By the customs quay in Thonon there is an old tower called la Tour des Langues. Here in the old days the farmers paid their feudals lords – the counts of Faucigny, the dukes of Savoy – their tribute: the tongues of all their slaughtered cattle.

Why did the lords of Faucigny, of Savoy, want such tribute? A beast has only one tongue, and every beast has one. The tally of tongues is the tally of beasts.

The tower of tongues.

Babel tower, lifted against the pale skyline of Switzerland across the lake,  
*lac*, milk of trees and beasts we lick, lap  
with our tongues.

Language then is the organ that laps up milk.  
Lick lap, the tour of tongues.

Languages of the world  
each written to confuse  
the simple thing we know

A dead ox. A rich man in a tower and a poor farmer.  
To say nothing of silence,  
the long saying nothing

dead tongues. A story beyond us.

18 August 2004, aboard *La Suisse*,  
paddlesteamer Thonon – Lausanne

## LAUSANNE

Agitate a new town. Begin the word.

The word is here, somewhere,  
admiring Chinese flowers in a Swiss restaurant  
or seeing our own late summer sultry Rose of Sharons  
growing on the hillsides down among the glittering hotels

vernacular flower, flower of ordinary America  
old fashioned farm and fucking, life, you pale red  
not pink, pale red goddess of silo and sunburn  
I miss you, you are gone from the world  
days when Christians praised God for the bounty of  
corn the beauty of women, gone, now they curse  
the stranger at the door and stifle bedroom laughter  
scour the oil off the merriment of skin.

This is what the Rose of Sharon told me  
in Switzerland, a town like Beverly Hills  
tilted down to a glare of Miami suncoast  
yellow calm in the hush of money.

No, that's what I told the flower.  
The flower just told me "*Hibiscus sum*  
I have a right to be anywhere  
my roots can hold,  
I am neither rich nor poor  
I have no opinions no politics  
I have no aspirations and no meaning  
no dark and no door. I flower."

19 August 2004, La Borne

## ON AN OLD CHART

Basque country never or the coast  
to Arcachon the isle of birds the sunken  
gardens of Napoleon once was *Teste's*  
*island* that wise man that mysterious  
agnosopher whose kin spill

soft on cushioned thrones mid Americas  
trying to say love comes back like a beaten dog  
like a peat bog always natural fertile and to burn  
fatal island once covered with strange gardens  
now covered by the voluntary sea.

19 August 2004, La Borne



=====  
All the things that know to me  
mean rain to you, a lightning  
zigzag out of Olympus where  
the aspirations of human folk  
bounce off the sky and plummet  
quick as a wicked epigram  
–Heine maybe, or Q.H.Flaccus –  
the sacred wiseguys of old poetry,  
altar and candle, altarboy and ruin  
all in one, no need for priest  
when the donkey brays up the hill  
and sweet rain kisses out of mist  
that hides La Chaux’s bare lime cliff  
a thousand feet above us where  
silent goats with six horns are at play.  
Milk them for our basic needs.  
Clouds white as albatrosses sail  
northward thick through the valley  
teleporting rain. Lightning.  
Lucifer. But sky  
does all the talking.

19 August 2004, La Borne

## THE ORPHAN

Or by often or another  
'an orphan' a 'whore's son'  
left on the doorstep of the sky  
the men of old called heaven

but the women then and women now  
call it Cloud our lord our lady  
dream all day and sing all night  
lightning on the mountain

When he grew old he died for you  
and died for me, the late husband  
of the universe. All weather  
is his grieving wife.

19 August 2004, la Borne

=====

Content men with disappearances:  
seawall of Dun Laoghaire, girl on a cannon  
pointed at England. I watched at midnight.  
Her lover climbed on with her,  
was on her. While England slept.

19 VIII 04

## CLOSETS

1.

Napoleon's ghost stands in every closet,  
that's who you listen to when the wind walks  
sipping shadow in the nursery or attic,

the mad small man from yet a stranger island.

2.

Stay in the closet and do it to me  
she said because the fox fur tickled  
and the old shearling coat was warm  
and no one missed her but her absence

fell as a dark spell like the morning mail  
touched them gently, using for once  
only their own fingers. *A piece of slate.*  
A snail crossing a national frontier.

19 August 2004, La Borne

## **REAL ESTATE**

Residence a blue  
permission nothing specified  
perhaps allowed  
do this: republic.  
Do this: steel hat.  
En garde! the poet  
peeks in the window,  
the butcher  
measures your front door.  
All is on its way,  
skeptical fir,  
integrity mahogany.  
Measles. Leaps  
left in the dead frog  
let galvanic loose.  
What is most of it  
is how to behave.  
Even when dead.  
Twist a cord  
a cord on fire  
falls though you  
want it to rise.  
Sunshine as disappointment.  
Deception. Stars  
get read about  
and the pool gleams  
thanks to the hard  
working Mexican  
his sweat hibiscus

avocado lemon squill

fruitless banana

lime tree shade.

What doesn't fit

you store in the sky.

20 August 2004

La Borne