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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