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But I held the hook of this deception
big fish yanked from the sea
and the boat hardly noticed.

The sea groaned, though,
and in that hour I knew a strange thing
that stayed with me when I came to land

That all these quiet people
streets and streets full of their orderly enterprise
or rowdy songs or old man goofiness

all these people were conceived
in ecstasy and orgasm and bliss
not one that did not come from such coming.

And all that starburst energy turns to this.
I brought the fish to my grandmother's house
and laid it on her table

I too have a right to be here
I reasoned, and no one spoke.
Silence is the only weapon

wisdom has against intelligence.
I knew something but the world would not
let the knowing of it do me any good.

9 February 2003

CARVE THIS ON A STONE:

sometimes a word's so heavy you can't lift it

9 II 03

WHY I AM A BABYLONIAN

I write in clay. I take my finger
that has touched you
a finger that has pointed to the sun
and stroked a cat's back, a finger
that has stirred the sacramental wine
and patted the tip of your sacred nose,

this finger drags some language into clay,
word by word gouging them in.

The clay dries, and if days or weeks later
I still like what the mud let me say
I'll have the tablet baked, and there it will sit
safe on a shelf until the world dissolves

you can break the tablet but you can't break the text,
the word and the writing and what it's written on
all one substance, no separation,
no ink to make difference, no untouched void.

9 February 2003

Is it about to snow
or did it just finish
we adjust ourselves
to the length of things

one way or the other
taking in as
much as we can
to be free

of what we need
a kind of mercy
not to know

how far we stretch
deep snow in the woods
a sea gull crying.

10 February 2003

I look down at the banister
and see my father's hand
gripping the rail
the funny way he had
almost double-jointed the hand
folding on itself like a sail
furled and the ship slips into harbor

his hand at the end of my arm
and how is that
we don't look anything alike
maybe the eyes are similar
maybe the eyes
they tell me are green are far away
his were, his are,
my arm comes to term with his hand

and there it is, I am holding
onto the banister of the staircase
in my own house, the wooden hill
to Bedfordshire, the wooden mountain
to the Land of Nod, my house
I think of it, my hand,
but it's his hand I see on the wooden rail

10 February 2003

A HOUSE

A house has so many ways
to say. A house to happen.
It is a place under all
to happen in. Open
one door and there's the sea.
Another and a horse comes in.
A house. A house is
the balance of the mind,
see-saw, a house is a son
is a daughter. A house needs you
to know. Everything
is construction.

If it isn't construction
it isn't feeling.
You can't feel if you don't build.

If you teach anything teach construction
so the soul has a house to fill
with its inquiries, its rock samples,
boy friends, sound effects, snapshots,
secret residues of love. A house has stains.

A house hides stains.

I would teach you to build houses
if I knew. Failing that, this is all
about failing, falling
back on language to decide, decode,

I can tell you when a house is built
by walking in. The door, the floor, the window,
the separation from the other, the outer,

and then the roof. What is a roof?
Who am I to tell you where to live?
Yet I must have some place to find you in.
You have to be under something
for me to get there
so I can tell you what it feels like
to walk through your door
into your animal vegetable mineral space
— every house is just a cellar of the sky.

A house hurries.

A house hides.

Symphonia Domestica — Strauss wrote
a long music to show how a house sounds
all day long, a house is time
held in your hand,
a house is space always running out of room.

Every art is a way of living in a place.
Some place it makes.

I want art to feel housely
so there is always room for me.

And the easiest door has mystery hinges,
a question enters,

enters itself, as you do, reading.

All the things we say along the way
are nomad things,
along the way to what, a house moves,
do you know that?

enough answers, now for some questions
I want to come visit you
where you live
so I must know that

I'm counting on your house to tell me
make up a place for us to be
as if it were your house and it will be

your house complete with orange juice and dust
you look up and see me in the door frame
looking my way in, and one of us asks

Did I say something or are you just listening?

10 February 2003

ONE SUN, RISING

Palpable in cloud,
your fingers
feeling it
through the atmosphere,
a grey world with molten silver in it.
Metal of the day.
Moonsilver. Wear white, wear pearls.
A day of self-conscious underwear.

You need the insides of things,
no blame.

 If I told you all this
you'd think I meant something else
something more.

 Maybe you're right.

Time plays with us
like children making up imaginary countries
and drawing flags for them
on pieces of paper with authentic crayolas
that fall and get ground into the carpet.
I am the color red-violet. You are the clock.

10 February 2003

THE CONFESSION

Be ready to forgive me for all I forget.

Be red. To give me four
and let me keep three, or just
this one and those two, the shining
ones, over the rooftop
calling me, that set
of well they aren't exactly twins.

Ma foi! they used to say (mild expletive)
or (holding his side after a meal
bigger than elegant) *mon foie!*
Right side, near the door.

We examined the toilet seat, the curious
framework those people used
to hold something not clear in position
between the collar and the water
so to say. We were going traveling
yet again. Some year let's stay home

even in dreams. So the three are ok,
by you, for me, to keep, ok?
Number is a color too, a commodious
burgundy, and names now that you mention it
are very like flags — you say a word
and I hear troops massing across the border,
dusky zouaves or whiskery uhlans,
and elks trotting through the snow away
from mankind as we used to call the human

moiety, the anxious minority, life on earth.

So now I just have to figure out their names.
Or remember them, naming is just remembering
Plato or one of his sidemen observed.
No they didn't, it was you yourself, in this life,
probably wearing the same nice blue shirt
dreaming of royal palms and Malibu and revolt.
But revolutions always speaks foreign languages,
you can't get there in English, something
about the aspects of the verb, the overwhelming
of nouns by antecedent adjectives, above all
the way the "the" is monarchist, patriarch
and absolute, the book as if there could be only one.
So dream on, red man, you're not even
hemidemisemi-Cherokee, you can't speak French, you're me.

11 February 2003

WORDSWORTH

It would be a satisfaction both aesthetic and moral for it to become widely known that the sitting president of the College of Pataphysics in France is in fact the lineal descendant of the illegitimate (as the thing was described in those days) or more politely said natural child of the not yet famous English poet — from rebel to laureate in one lifetime — William Wordsworth, the child conceived in 17--, fruit of an ardent but hasty flourish of sonnets between the wandering revolutionary and a trusting girl in Normandy.

11 February 2003

GENETICS

The best thing that can be hoped for
sexual propagation is that running
water purifies itself my father said.
And if you take yourself seriously
long enough you wind up strangely
respecting everybody else. It isn't
always easy to fit such tacit sentiments
into the pataphysical project but
genetics makes monsters of us all.
I for example have green eyes and bushy
brows, features observed with suspicion
when I travel in what used to be
called the Orient. But now we don't
have names for anything anymore.

11 February 2003

JUST DESSERT

Taste as much of it as you can
because there are servants listening
below the stones. They want
to help us if we let them
but sometimes the price is terrible:
to be respected when we don't respect ourselves.

We can call this Chicago eventually
it is an old disease as America goes
this doubt that blinds foreknowledge

because from the beginning of my moment
I knew I would avail

it would be right, long and hard, but right
I would be the accurate thing
a reverent answer to the world

this work I'd come to do that made me be.

11 February 2003

IT HAS TO BE SOMETHING

it has to be something
late, a Valentine
a little early, a heart
happening all the time

call this a blue inscription
on a red island
found by amateur archeologists
fooling around in a cave

call this the witch's well
from which you hand out fire
and give it to me
thinking so far away from the mind.

12 February 2003

PORTENTS

Break the sky into six pieces
and feed them to bees.
Birds are born. Decide
by listening to their chirping
which way the wind wants to blow.

Go with it, I would say, except
I don't like to issue commands
any more than you like to receive them.
Like. Like is a lake
where scientists drown
swimming across to the island
of explanation. That's
why I beg you never to explain,
take the train, dress simply
and always hold something in your hand.
It can be a star or a garden hose.
We have to hurry. Any
minute the surgeon will be ready.

12 February 2003

PROM

All right let there be music
I concede the point
to the presumptuous ocean
you have dragged your carcass also
to this promontory
beholding something
we seem to be
when something Grecker is
tantalizing near

so I permit the folkish
to come over the music
a dream we can't wake up
from over the intellectual
esplanade along the river
of change, behold
that hankering for regularity
the fucking smooth
that did our mothers in.
The thought of how far we have come
turns me to stone inside you.

13 February 2003

INSTRUCTIONS:

Against the natural cheese of feeling
out of even screws and bolts and Q-tips
rig a different animal together
to stand here
brave as daylight and feel nothing at all.

13 February 2003

To wake up wanting you
insults us both.

13 II 03

APOCALYPSE

Music is in fact made
of intervals and silences,
can't I have that

a mechanical Rabbi
ripping down the holy tent
to show the common stars?

13 February 2003

SNOW

Snow, two months of it
have changed the contours of the ground
closer to me now white earth
rises towards my windows
overnight hills and a mountain plowed
and bare trees hide nothing
but what I'm thinking.

Contour is meaning, I know
whoever I know from the slopes
the yieldings, the things that reach
towards me, now even the ground
in my backyard comes at me
and all the trees are strangers.

13 February 2003

[end of Notebook 253]

A VALENTINE FOR CHARLOTTE

The time to say this
is now

 before
all the novels and epics
get themselves written
somehow athwart us,

our hands, our long
translations of a lost original,

all this means you, we are together
like consonants and vowels
in one word

 inextricable
the way the meaning of a poem
gets lost in, survives
at the same time in
another language

till it is all we have
and more than complete
the way this moment is,

hereish and nowish hence always.

14 February 2003

Pour ma Colette

L'oiseau a eu
peur de souhaiter
un cœur plus
grand que le sien

—ton cœur par
exemple plus
vrai que le monde—
mais enfin il

chante ses vœux.

Je t'aime, je t'aime toujours

