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STANZA

Caught in stanzas caught in rooms  
I talked about you last night as if your name  
could deliver me into action

a touch

squeezed inside a touch,

making love on stairs,

up yours,

a word whispered in a telephone

to let a nervous interlocutor

know you're the one.

You're the one.

A sky comes over my head

and explains freedom

to the worst of unbelievers.

11 April 2002, Paris

## ON THE AVENUE PETER THE FIRST OF SERBIA

All the chestnut trees won't help you, all  
the winking blue green crosses  
of the pharmacists homeo- or allopath,  
all the stone hospitals, all the stone.

The knives on the brasserie tables  
will do nothing for you, the cheese  
in Fauchon's window, the lovers  
nose to nose on the terrasses, noses,  
eyes, chestnuts, soap, kisses, rivers,  
stone — nothing.

And for you in particular  
the sun has nothing special in mind when it goes up  
or down, you are a maker of shadows, that's all,  
for you the milkman brings nothing, the garbageman  
takes nothing away, not for you the album  
of stamps from the African colonies, not for you  
or anyone like you the chestnut trees in the park,  
you long for them, you look at them, they let you do that  
but don't ask for anything more,

they're whitening now, in Zurich they will be pink,  
in Chicago terribly absent, vanished, and not just for you,  
but it's not for you in particular that the senator  
sidles by with his bodyguard, not for you  
the empty tunafish can on the sidewalk,

the cat was lucky but you're not part of it,  
the cat's not for you, everybody's  
waiting for somebody else, nobody's waiting for you,  
not even death, that's how lucky you are,  
luckier than a cat or a chestnut tree,  
something for everyone but nothing for you,  
none of it is for you, you're free,  
free as a dead seagull on the canal,  
free as the station when the train is gone,  
free as a tree in the wind, free as the day before yesterday.

11 April 2002, Paris

## THINGS SEEN

Dante's church

people pray

800 years

one sixteenth of that period

gone by

since I first saw it

visiting the world

the time holds

I am the beginning

of all things I remember

I am the end of everything I did

That is what a mirror is

or a tall window

open on the square

seeing everybody

nobody sees you.

11 April 2002, Paris

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A man who would steal a pear from a pear tree  
what else might he do?  
Should a mother trust him with her child?

Give me a man who can steal  
an apple from a linden tree  
and he's the one I'll put my money on,

my silver tarnish faith,  
and even more than him, a man  
who leaves things where they are

too shy (or something) to look  
a tree in the eye  
hurries by, content with going.

11 April 2002, Paris

## ODEON

What was I writing in the night?  
Was it green and a dome  
like the skull inside which  
countless old bronze Buddhas ripen  
to a calm thought that frees us all

or was I just weather, a desperate dog  
sniffing at love's hindquarters hoping,  
was it a word (no hope no fear)  
that tells me only I am still here  
a broken record and an athlete sprawls,

thrown stone, shatter glass, a book  
in the window spills on the curb  
read the word tread the word  
we gave our lives for this lucidity

red and jungle gold the color the cover  
Jules Verne zeppelin undersea a sky  
full of coconuts

                    a baffled imagination  
heals itself by counting things

colors, German visitors, dirty nylon flag.  
Maybe I really didn't fall.

He tried  
to put me together before I was born  
eager for the park, the beautiful, the pond.  
Feed ducks, think theory — I'll be all right,  
it is a city, it can take care without me,

but needs me to upset its balance, city,  
boil carrots in coffee, shout  
incomprehensible subjunctives in the street  
just in case you're there to hear them,  
hear me, be bad, louche behavior of foreigners  
renews the city, o please listen to me,  
flash your eyes to make me think you understand,

a word is the opposite of what I mean,  
sheds from my desire as the apple absorbs  
every frequency of light but red.

What it gives back.

You get what is left whenever feeling happens  
no wonder you won't talk to me.  
Wasn't it here I first met you, other end  
of the couch, crowded bus, feet  
join under one cushion, how, no smoking,  
something happened here between us  
long ago we wake to now.

12 April 2002, Paris



SOUS LE SCEAU D'AVICENNE

This recital  
from which spirit  
rises,  
    mira,  
spirit is what is told,

the recitation of verity  
is what comes out of the mouth

on the rue Jacob the rue  
des Saints-Pères the intersection  
the schanigarten of this medicine

sit and ponder.

Look at those teenage angels  
bellybuttoning across the street

for wisdom is a house with seven gates  
seven turnstiles  
a wide intersection full of bicycles

wisdom is everybody going somewhere different  
going fast

    this street I came long ago to see  
because so many people lived and some still do.

2,

the visionary recital the door  
open on a courtyard  
young chestnut trees and a redhead  
reciting his catechism  
kilims spread and Sirius overhead  
brass faucet on the old stone horse trough

mild night on the planet of probation  
coming. Fitful  
lunch beneath the school of medicine.

12 April 2002, Paris

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The ordinary things

skeptic

grain in a bowl bowl in a window

words that sound like things

and having heard the chemical

marriage when the thing comes along

and meets the word

and the child

suddenly conjugates reality

this word long heard

with this bright new thing

unioned each

enriched by the suchness of the other

inexhaustible delight

that *this is that*

this feeling in me

is what others spoke of and now it's mine

all reverence and submissiveness

stems from those silken nuptials,

mysticals, the word and its thing

the authenticity

when convention and perception meet.

13 April 2002, Paris

## NATURAL

How poetry a natural base if no one sees the moon  
and the sun is weather forecast smile and rain  
just an irritant and thirst unknown and hunger  
a political remark?

How Lorca now and a horse  
a road? Somewhere else  
there is a moon a man  
with dusty feet on a white road, a sparrow  
a fountain. Not here.

Sometimes I think  
poetry keeps our contract with that place  
a deposit of faith, a vatican of ordinary words.

13 April 2002, Paris

## JESUS EPUISE RETOMBE

Among the stones. The stories.

At this station he  
exhausted falls again

down on such stone. The word  
dejected sprawls  
among the shadows of the columns

shadowy frescoes a man  
struggles with an angel hard  
but the angel almost

smiles. The Angel Almost.  
What do you do  
when they struggle against you

and you are above it all  
but love every moment  
every man of them,

you, a god among men,  
an angel wrestle-dancing a young Jew.  
We are touched in the hollow of the thigh.

We fall.

This is incarnation.

Born among rocks

We are love again, no word

but what the soft warm

hollows of our mouths

speaks. To have used

up the whole dream and be born.

To be here again,

no further, but no further away.

13 April 2002

Saint-Sulpice, Paris

## THE SECRET HISTORY OF THE WORLD: SAINT SULPICE CHAPTER

1.

Before the English stole geography, stole the earth,  
The Zero Degree Meridian passed through Paris.  
Right through this church — down the wall across the floor  
A thin brass line. A brass line before they stole the measure.

2.

If you sit in the angel chapel and look down the nave  
You see a marble panel, ruddy, intricately patterned,  
A beachscape, you think, a view of the pleasant  
Frightening place where the land meets the sea.  
Late in the 19<sup>th</sup> century painters happened to see this panel  
And impressionism happened to be born.  
Secret of their art: if you can see this, all can be shown.

3.

In this church were baptized long ago  
The Marquis de Sade and Charles Baudelaire.

13 April 2002, Paris

## LOVE STORY

I am a city as you deal with me  
room for you plenty and measureless streets  
stone lawn electric white  
but unreliable the way a city is sometimes  
every fucking thing is closed.

13 April 2002, Paris



## THE DESIGN

One to wonder

Two to do

Three to threaten

Four to get

Five to fight

Six to success

Seven to save

Eight to wait

Nine to know

And Ten to tell.

Now pick up the phone and remember.

14 April 2002, Paris

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And when it's done  
a boulevard is always crowded  
things move  
like words overheard  
in Alabama, two  
old crackers talking  
about what neither of them knows.

14 April 2002, Paris

POSTCARD

It isn't that everything has to happen again,  
it isn't. It is that it never stopped happening,  
it never stops. That's what the hand  
said to the thigh and the thigh agreed, adding  
A door is not the same as a real conversation.

14 April 2002, Paris

PLACE DES VOSGES

Kissing passersby again  
in Sunday traffic  
all those sweet babies  
the pigeons the sparrows  
a perfectly dry fountain  
this pure white dust  
the grass. The forbidden.  
The kiss the pass the kiss  
they all go by lured by  
such kisses, whose, air's  
love's forcefield, starsex  
the breeze hugs them  
as they move, caresses you  
as you sit still. Suddenly  
nowhere to be but on earth.

14 April 2002, Paris

## VITRAUX

Serenity of windows  
vaults the all  
above them gloom or color  
tourists trudge through Our Lady

what are they looking for  
in this vast place, a hint  
of heaven, colors of the overheard  
pulse of God's heart

splayed open into light?  
And what am I looking for  
looking at them,  
is seeing always looking for a brother?

14 April 2002, Pars