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Without the promised rain some rapture still.

I think of you when I recall snug-trousered
girls in bowling alleys who took my breath away
as I watched them curve and dip to make
so beautifully their paltry scores.

For being
is everything.

To gather desire to yourself
is to be a star in the sky no matter what.
Stay long in brightness as you can,
the dark is common, endless, base
romanticism to suck us in.

Whereas you
are beautiful and difficult, you make splits
not strikes, you have menses, stupid boyfriends,
absurd self-images made of doubt and Cosmo ads
and with all that you're the bearers of the dawn,
archer, icon, motorboat from heaven,
the glory of your humdrum lives made sudden
architecture. Sculpture. Anode. Greece.
And you're the only one knows how to make it rain.

26 April 2002
Flagler Beach

They live for movement
and I want to be still,
the fervent arguments of virtue to enact.
If I could do what I want to do with you
all I want is to be bigger than the jungle

and not be alone.

We are far from the sea here,
we left without answering all it asked,
interminable psychoanalysis the waves
bringing the question always back to you.

Zion. Miriam having deep
conversation with her man,
their fingers touching one another too.

Risen. Zion. The new born
elders of this Atlantean temple
the two of us are. Legs columns
seashells red sand I finally
found the place where I was born.

26 April 2002, Old Town

ALEPH. MEM. THAV.

First middle last letters of the
alphabet spell *emeth*, truth.

Emmes, we said when I was a kid,
as if it were a familiar thing,
its name fitting our mouths.

First middle and last—
so truth is the extremity
of the sayable,

the edge of silence

plus the core of what is said.

What does a word mean?

Trees. Sacrifice.

Think of how we speak.

A word offered. The river goes.

26 April 2002

Old Town

old measure
sunrise over Suwannee
mists and birds

do I need to say the names
or is it one
with the reed and the green and the vague?

27 April 2002
Old Town

On the wing

Pelicans ibises great grey heron
walking around the jetty
peaceful fisherwomen at Cedar Key
bayous beyond the Gulf of Mexico at last.

27 April 2002

Things take in mouth
the way women age
against the grain of trees
grapevines willow
stand on limestone
rim above a sunken place
ancient rainfall filled.
Drought now and the sea
is far, its agitations
do not interpret the land
before us hot and whole
we get the first
kiss of its information.

27 April 2002
Old Town

Gave the king his land
He gave him back a plot to live on
Live on two bags of barley for a year
And gave a quarter of that
for offerings. Fire
sacrifices. Offer.
Offer everything and be.

(from Lama Norlha's story about his root Lama, Tarjay Gyamtso Rinpoche)

27 April 2002

Cedar Key, Gulf of Mexico

THE SUBJECT

All boats are lies.

A river

is all regulation

but no one listens,

it's like a dollar,

all sermon and no spinach,

we keep coming back to love

the kleenex index

who will let me take

myself seriously enough

to suffer for me

to let me also weep

outmoded manners,

love poems

sending telegrams to queens.

2.

The truth is in the ground

in the last days of oil economy

battle for the obvious

against the subtle criminals

suck the word's marrow

what else do I have

to give you, what will last

beyond this stock exchange of lust

out in the plague-struck caravan.

3.

weep weep because you lose
the one you mean
the kleenex customs of a new
religion problem child of loss
romance is the only real

I am an airport
sick with destinations

longtime president of doubt
a master mason by eyes alone
build Shulamith her Temple
sex change every afternoon
the pillars scratching the sky
the white one the black one
blue crystal instead of eyes

4.

swimming pool all day the heads
emerge in accurate conversations

this is the business of the world
to come up for air now and again

to float the body innocent and clean

5.

The clamshacks completely hide the sea

Be a tourist in your underpants

In killjoy weather exalted thought

This country is the opposite of talk.

28 April 2002

Old Town

TURTLES

The turtles of Dixie County
are large and limber, seem at home
in limepit pools and sandy woods
bare as Berlin.

I have been here
in dream before now
unrelenting green incubator heat
as if the newborn from the north
need such breathless care.
And the sun all day long
a kind of Muzak in the sky.
We are pale in the face
of such determined prospering,
be botanical, be vegetable and wise,
have turnip heads and kudzu hands
wanting to touch it all and hold.

28 April 2002

DAWN ON THE SUWANNEE

1.

As if I were a scientist of empty rivers
I stare into this mist.
Two eyes already and nothing seen

2.

except what simply seems.
And there it is, the smell of river,
willow, a Carolina wren reciting
all she knows, some other
creature eloquent far away.

3.

we have come so far to be so ignorant,
everything at rest except the question.

4.

Overcast. Seven and the tyrant
sun (ten minutes risen) has still
not wormed through the mist.

But east is different, a pale
before yellow before red
is trying to lift the light

and the wren is closer
or sings louder, how can I tell,
the renaissance by which I live

scale perspective and how to think
was not built with birds in mind.
Nothing in mind.

Cevici cevici cevici says the wren
sounding like Romanian. Ana Bodea
I miss you. The Iron Gates

I will fly over soon, hurrying
east to come back soon,
a bird would sicken on these whys,

how can there be so many languages
and so little certainty.
A whippoorwill – first in fifty years.

28 April 2002

Old Town

REPORT FROM THE WORLD OF PLEASURE

Schuyler's still a shark. I shark, I shark,
I botchu, I botchu! Southern shark, two hours
this game has pleased him. Cool at poolside,
I've checked then baseball scores and understand.
The palms by the pool, the paranoia.
There are sharks, after all, not far, and things
do pursue us. Here's sharpa, here's sharpa,
then he roars SHARPA, mixing shark with sharp,
the teeth he's thinking, then teeth you don't see
in this underwater world of our sensations
days drown in sun. The furled upright
table umbrella is a crowned Blessed Virgin,
tattered white robe, a flounce of coif,
gilt finial for her heavenly crown.
No face. The oldest virgins in the world
had no faces. Only functions. Like me,
right here, unseen by you, writing this down.

28 April 2002

Jacksonville

TAKE OFF

The crying baby greets the Dakinis,
sky-walkers, the luminous
presences from whom we improvise,
for whom the mind
sky and brain are one continuum,
a thought in brightness.
And where do you think the stars are stored?

29 April 2002
over Jacksonville

Edgewise to earth a wing
is a kind of glad refusal

rhythmic spurning
by which the earth

as long as the breath lasts
can be refuted.

29 April 2002
over Jacksonville

A MAP OF MY POETRY

dots on an outline
map shores and rivers
boundaries of states
and nations,
 dots that are spoken
into space, where have I been.
Words are the spooks of place.

2.

As a child I had an outline map of the US
a template in oaktag, stab with a penpoint
through the holes and make points, later
connect the points you'd made and find
the outline of the country. What is the inline?
It was what got said when a voice in my head
smiled in me and said Missouri or
this is where your father took your mother
on their honeymoon a little bit outside
the boundaries you know how to draw.
This was the inline, what the shape of the map,
shape of hills and fall of rivers
made happen in my head in words I knew
how to write down. The names of cities.
That is all. That is the map of my poetry.

3.

And later when women came walking along
the same voice tried to map them too

to be true to the outline of the feelings, to be true
to the inline of what they made me do, body and mind,

I was hateful as a clam thinking about the sea.

Who can listen to such long intelligence

all long life never not saying?

Because every meeting is a doing

and each one changes all the rest.

30 April 2002

THE PROFESSION

I am a traveling wise man.

I travel. I'm not

Very wise but it's my job,

Not very good at it

But good enough.

Not every baker is the best,

He still makes bread.

30 April 2002

BLUES

We've got two colors
called blue,
sky and then the indigo,

angel and devil
(blue as my wings)

and when they fight it our
inside a man
he's got the blues.

30 April 2002

A day with no moonrise this
day where the moon went down
after we woke and what do we have
to look forward to at night
but night,
 daughter of pleasure and the blues.
Everything waits for us.

30 April 2002