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TOUCHING UNITY

new Spel/s old roots

Tree stuck
to get her
held,
dowel
reverent insertion
deep.
Early made this
ramshackle mind.

We stuck
to each she
leaves green
gospel a room
left in us
is us.

19 May 1995

BORROWED BAMBOO

I
]scatter out
of age
not blue memory
exacter Livius

a *mund* or ditch us
around the circum

stantial ferential
Nvmen

a sort
of feathers this
veteran *fel*

bitterness of all
surviving not men

amniotic leafy
a city is how men sleep[

II
]]cd be animat
spur]spurn

anything
can come out of the
heart anything
]care

cards fall
Ægypt sneezes
brick or back

of the Templ[

riverdivers[[

III

archi]*pelagus*

not

with standing

islands either

or further

truly and wisely[

meant to farrow

eroici furori

]Nabatæan aftermoons

In stony Pætra, Pætræa,

a city

in the wilderness

opined by winds

hear me who never spoke[

IV

Thes

are our roots

our only

have

thes

are them only

who we all

only are

a dare
or shadow
flown by bird
against
quick the rock
you learn
to read

thes
are words are
our shade

V
Midafter
noon high
scorning this mere
river

hundreds and hundreds
sky seized
the wild geese

from these
we scryed
to sculpt those

letter by letter
utter actual

grass-glib
the grease of speech[

VI
Anser the sky

tell me
in marble

meanings fly
the fast
by safety flamed

fluctubus aut

rare form
a feeling
is feeling

the birds left scars on the sky.
This seen we scry.
We listen to what it tells us
in our heads when we look.
That is the whole history
of what we are.

20 May 1995

REPARTURE

Triste answers
to all the truths

plains plain
as her face
pearlmallow by dreamlight

we sleep
around an island
waves wake



reparture : the score
tightens round my hips
I give a public reading for the moon alone
larger than ordinary streetlamps
bellow in their night

score : a count or tally, a notch
cut in the experience itself

by which the finger (say of a blindman
or a child ignorant of history)
finds it again, that place
it needs to touch, to enrol it
in his presentness, or



a count of twenty or some like number
totalizing digits, that's all we have,
an achieved number in a game
of runs or goals or points,
or all such numbers (we grow abstract
as we grow younger) reckoned

as the pain result of all that play,



a piece of music with some paper on it
only love or such like mystery can read
and turn to singing, dancing, or ricj women
with stiff aigrettes stalk up the marble staircase to endure.
Or else a list of all your winters.



Some plants in us,
the lotuses of commonsensual experiments
loft up in us, unsoiled by understance,,
pink as a cloud at the edges of the night
or blue with whispers
and white starred around
a sunray fixed as the core of it,
the stamina of what we witness
and stays in us, forever, forcing
recollection to arise as desire,
this little floating astronomicon or flower,



and did you see the moon once
spin on her chilly pivot

and all the unfamiliar seas
dry as hopefulness hove
into view, backside of a backside,
and none to see? And none
to lust for thee, child? The night
was luminous, the moon was dull,
the craters worn out with receiving
daydust and far splendorings



from which our local lotoi, don't they,
take seed and grow?

In this evangelical mud
a pantheistical preening flower plumps
crimson, outmanoeuvring the mind.

Be me for a change
and know what you are
from my strict trigonometries

perspectiva liberalis

aut amoris

the view
from a freeman's eyes.

2.

Nouveux, nerveux, survivals:
mints and madrepores, fresh word
from nearer atolls, gannets
imperative or low on wave
I am tired of answering questions about the sea.

The statue represents nothing.
No fish are taken in these waters.
The Japanese have scoured the sea and gone
—it is quiet even fifteen fathoms down—

the wrecks give light, and holothurns wind
rippling through soft undertows in purple calm.
The business of the sea is gone.

3.

To go the other way round
to dig a long canal of Mars
around your garden. *Mundus*,
to protect the world
as if it was your little town,
the land inside your boundary stones,
your own.

Your garden.

To have pear trees
and bend them to trellises so they grow
right-angled and crucified (*en espalier*) — the fruit
of that aching symmetry comes
easy to our hand and is sweet.
You never know how the shape of what you do
affects the sweetness of what flows from you.

Our deepest body
is behavior.
Our real flesh
is what we do.



Things might always be this way,
the way the night
has darkneses and darkneses
and none of them
have to do with how you feel.
Music stems from such neglect.
Cut off from a world
that is responsive to our moods
what choice does any
shepherd have but song? Theory
of pastoral. Father
has left us here alone, only a flute
to play with, and all
the alternatives are wolves.

And the old shepherd rubs his hands
and seems almost happy when he says
Whether or not you love each
other, you die alone.

4.

One summer day in '54 in low *relievo*
among grey skies I saw sun lit far off
the cathedral of Rouen. Just there
the English burned her.

*In all conversation
the sacrament is busy in the eyes
focusing and remembering
whatever we take for God.*

Through the smoke of what made Norman sunshine thin,
peak, pale, plunder cloud wonderstance, I moaned
in that sluggish orgasm called History.
Discernibly all times are now. Disney, topsoil,
Triton, Meyebear, the bishop with his wolf-eyes
but a name like Pigge. A glass of water
handed me by Jean Cocteau the elegantest admiral of it.
I reach it up for poor Joan to drink.

5.

Parmi les mousses du forêt de la Magie ensevelé

After so many moon-times staring in his lap
and weary of the sheer causality of things
he moaned like the wind in an iron stove
on a night that was windy more than cold

so why does a mind need a fire? Why is life
so busy with contrivances? Solenoids to start a motor,
brakes to rein it in, wheels, plumb-lines, levels, bells
to call unruly time to order and perplex the night

with arcane wakings, ceremonies, sex and strawberries.
He moaned like a drunkard remembering his mother's name.
To touch the world he had made himself some skin
and stretched it taut across his arms and chest

and built some bones to hold it to its work.
But now the breast bone pressed down upon his heart
like some common stone you'd roll on top of things
to hide them safe from sunshine and from earth.

His heart moaned up against the stone. Sick with telling
he had kept still too long. The things he knew
knew him too. He moaned like the earth
falling open beneath a crumbling wall. He moaned

and the stone cracked and his skin woke up. Ferns
uncurled, and people's children began their vagabondage
vague as guitars through his woods. What we sleep
is never what we wake to. A moan means.

In the holy forest nobody listens and everybody hears.

21 May 1995

Not by hurried disposition or circuit of long-familiar animals do we live—
“the only stars we see from Heaven are the fires of human
bonding,”* but any angel would say that, are the things true that angels say
as well as useful and adorable? If I came to you up any street
swinging scarlet leather, would you listen with all your skin?
They tried to squeeze a belt around the sky (‘reality,’ ‘Zodiac,’ ‘astronomy’)
and are you busy in underground offices, languidly praying to Chance
which never comes because there is no accidental world, no luck,
no book of oddities. Everything computes — and that’s the terror.
Are you adorable, Avenue of the Opera, are you eloquent and a river?
In every elegant garden sits reading in mulberry shadows
the woman I will never get around to answering. It is too fond
in me to say so much, too fond in her to know so many flowers.
It is my mother reading among blue hydrangeas.

22 May 1995

*Giraudoux, *Sodome et Gomorrhe*.

[ADVERTISEMENT]

[saluting André Breton's *La Clé des Champs*]

I was anxious for you and a stone
rolled away from the blade of my door

la clé des champs means the magnesium key
that lets you open meadows and go in,

escape from these illusory suburbs
into the *actual* condition

of which most windows are just witnesses
and most doors angry borderguards,

they will not let you in.
Because the field or meadow or

—keep it simple— the world out there
vanishes as soon as you step into it.

Its outness blanches and retreats.
But with this key I stole from him

every wind is a keyhole and the lethargic afternoon
an escalator full of angels.

Everything is what it is
even when you yourself step in.

You are there where you want to be—
but without my key you're a duck trying to land in a mirror,

you're a leaf falling forever with no tree.

23 May 1995

HOMME HOMME

I am a man
I have seen a barn on fire
and never shot a deer

I have picked on people
littler and even bigger than me
and found money in the gutter

(a thousand-franc note,
a five dollar bill)
I have admired people on buses

and walked home
and there have been days
when I have even forgiven my friends,

I have confused myself
with my desires,
I have worn rings and secret tokens

love's laughable colors
tattered in tournaments where I
was the only knight who showed up,

I have fallen asleep
while reading
and let the book

finish itself without me,
and I have left the church
before the Mass was done.

23 May 1995

DIFFICULTIES OF THE OPERA

Every day at noon the opera is interrupted by the news.
Thousands more have died in Rawnda, Somalia, Bosnia and Karachi,
My grandfather's city — it is dangerous, o America, to bear a name
Ending in a vowel — every vowel is the shriek or moan of the dying.
But the soprano never dies. The fat *tenore* bears her to the wings
And clumps of flowers miraculously sprout from the flowerless audience
To fall around her. She stoops and scoops them up and sweeps away
Her arms full of roses at her next curtain call. He comes to, pudgy
Fingers fluttering his hanky, wishing he had gardenias too.
There are so few certainties and so much music to get through.

23 May 1995

I think the nature of each storm is different,
lashed flags in sea flurry, an old man strapped to his reminiscence—
are any of us ripe for plain flowering, what rhododendrons do
on a cloudy May morning, the lovers lost in the woods,
monogamy not rare among the ones with wings? Winds.
I don't want to make you feel good, I want to make you worry hard
about things that never troubled you before. When angels do
come down, it is not to the most helpless that they come
— poverty and grief are strictly left to mortals to console
since they create them. Why should angels help you if your brother won't?

24 May 1995

M A D R E P O R E

a coral reef or colony of shoals
the bitter residue of all their lives,
a castle,

 you walk on it, it cuts your feet
a we are singular
in vulnerability
and they are pluriform and yearn
effectively to be one.

Suddenly tired, the mind grounds on unfamiliar names,
a word one finds in Proust,
shoals of suits and evening gowns in the orchestra
waiting for the daughter of Minos and Pasiphae
as if Paris is all theater
and they only stop acting —Sarah!—
when they clump out on the drumhead of a stage
and the real — Racine — takes over.
Only she is actual. Outside in the street
the rest of us are sketchy dramatists
trying to explain what and how we feel.
I asked Olson once and even he wasn't sure
if the Ocean is sufficient explanation.

25 May 1995

After all it's done to us, now it smells like flowers.
Halfway up the octave,
between lily of the valley and lilac,
who are you?

And someone is having trouble starting her car,
if the road is not implicit in the base you'll never get there.
A bird decides to mimic the whine of her solenoid.
Or is this machine also (like the rest of us) talking to itself?

26 May 1995

PASTORAL

*Pré ter-naturel, les chanoins mugirent dans leur chapelle
et l'herbe forme l'objet de regard
pour vingt-cinq ou vingt-sept brebis de Corse.
Alors, psalmodie d'autres jours, songes de chanvre, la harpe
entra et les chanoinesses fled with the sound of candles
whipped out by a passing ocean breeze. Trade winds,
my father said, that hold square-rigged
merchantmen enthralled by the severe sameness of the sea.
On this meadow preposterously natural
lewd counsellors neither head nor coda
fall in love with their disordered charges
and they think music is some sort of an excuse—
empathy, kingdom of sparrows,
a tree bored with alphabets, the mower
has piloted his mower over the hill and the roar
of his engine soon follows. Peace on Earth. A quarter hour
before his afternoon audiences, the Pope sits down to read.
Asgard teems with good intentions. In a flash
of anybody's eye heroes are born and die. We perish
from lyrical distraction. What is to be done?
A bitter world's in birth. Thoughtfully, over good wine,
we study ways to make the food chain beautiful.*

26 May 1995