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This other shrine
the middle of her
tsé-ndi this wife

is my life. Commentary:
my life also is my wife,
the middle shrine,

this text.
Truth is not interesting,
it is simply so.

30 July 1995

THE STAR PEOPLE

1.

Uncertain of the principle
one looks at the result.
Star hazard, oil spill of grace
over the baffled ocean of your life
subduing your wind's life. Woe.

When the stars claim you for their own
your life is strange. And some
lead strange lives in every town
to catch the stars' attention
and so bring down that interesting
scientific cosmic bunch
who come to check out our turf,
set tabernacle up and live in us,

and dwelt amongst us.

People act strange to get their attention.
Linda who walks like a crane
on Crane's Beach. Elvis with his head
stuffed with Elvis and his loins on fire—
got to leave room for starstuff to get in,

they come from space and space they need,
they are seed, nostalgia, glorious
stripteases, morning glimpses, fathers' last
words, the Nude Testament, the book you pick
up from an unknown shelf and read
ten pages of before you cry out "I have read
this story once before." Or maybe more.

And they are wheat, nostoc, ambergris,

they are Oscar Wilde and goldfinch,
they teach you to repeat.

2.

When the stars claim,
it's not your name
they want. What women
and men will call you
ever after works for them.

Master of the One
Wife Rockledge
Hermitage. Or Lord
of the Blue Stanzas,

who can say,
a little boy
with zero in his hands?
Or a grumpy old fellow
fussing over his text
like a crow at his roadkill?

Or a man who says banana
when he meant to say brush?
The body is full of surprises,

the stars come down as light
and light it up inside,
mostly their light is pain

and sometimes sense and some
times comes as pleasure,
who can say?

We are lightning only.
We are space.
We pray

to the intruders to intrude,
to Space Invaders that they viking in
and all that literal jazz

and all the while the Stars
Most Actual are
acting in us

by sweet luck and some mysterious jeweler,
light from the stone that
wakes at the zen chilly heart of the world.

30 July 1995

THE ANT'S DOORWAY

Emmet gate, gold crust by sunray
and a host of them entering. There is a chalice
we drink every day with not
much knowing. An ant walks in and out of earth.

The specified. The concerns of an alien people
rehearsed all round us, and we are ignoramuses
in this global parliament. Such
an Italian idea, a nose
that grows longer with every lie,
I know, I grew up with them,
they sought the sun I sought the shade.
Fig trees, tomatoes bent down in evening sunlight
slanting in over Pine Street, bend to gather,
gold crust and a book came
spilling all secrets. I know, I read,
and the blue leather of the sky
flopped open and there were words,
I know, I said each one out loud
to my father, or they were my father
and I was John, whipping myself into frenzies
of guessing, guessing, these words
that adults say have some great meaning
knowing which makes them so dull and sad.
Yet I yearned to know but would not ask
—they asked in their season, they
were simple and look what happened, I could see
what they are now, grown up and dull and down—
so I would never ask, I would read
the leaves that fell from the sky
every year around the feast of San Genaro
when the girls in white satin blouses
pressed against me all unknowing
in the turbulent fiesta, watching the tombola
and sausages reeked above the firepit.

Connie it might be, or Laretta,
vague and zitty, very pretty, pressed
against my arm and I understood her breasts
and set those syllables also
to work in my silent sing-song. Singing,
signing. I think of it now
when the first cool night of this summer
remembers the ordinary weather of the world

before we broke the machine.
Nagasaki, because we knew.
Waco, because we didn't care
for anything but looking good.
And when I say we I mean Amerimen.
Not Laretta, though she kissed
each one of us on the way to war.
I mean Americans when I say we
and you translators better get it right
our we is going to become your they
and what will the poem do then, poor thing,
with its pronouns repronounced
and its sex unhinged and nobody will know?

But ants go in and out their public door,
having nothing to hide but their lives.
Every bull and every lion and every
man they have consumed, earth walks,
earth takes back in what it has made,
an ant is more than adequate, an ant is many
and we are not even their weather.

The inventory of the bullfighter's house they keep
and they do not read the Bible — modern
Americans in that particular — though they
—ants— would understand it if they read,

whereas we do not, we read our way to Christ
through all that tribal flurry and fulmination
and think the God is jealous angry that he called Father.
We read it backwards, we always should begin

with what is closest to us, what came close to us
to touch us, to sit beside me on the side of the well
like a man wanting a drink and trailing his foot in the water
and talking to us of this thing and that until we guessed.
Start there, with Jesus's left foot in the dust,
start there, where an ant would, and there start reading.

But this is not reading. This is an ignorant
summoning of ants
 to attend this otherworld of our business.
Our strange house. I am impressed by them,
their going in and going out,
like a mower in a meadow surprising
by being here and then you think of something else
and then you hear him far away,
no time has passed except in you, he turns
and comes again, you hear him, his power
mower or his scythe or his song coming closer
—technology has nothing to do with time.
Examination paper of the sky we study,
hopeless with vastness. *Know this*
it says but who are you who's speaking?
In this world there's only Jesus, Laretta and me.

So many analogies. But someone else
is talking, a tickle of far meaning
on some reservation of the skin, a guess
flummoxed through the air, to land on you, oi, oi, and
cartoon noises, who is talking? Who is talking?

It is not any man I read in a book
is not any woman I stood beside
in the wild baptisms of summer,
no man, no woman, no emmet even,
ants don't talk, or if they do
we do not listen,
 and what we do
is all that matters here, to be responsible
for Nagasaki (we *knew*)
 who is talking?

And they're crying far away, so far
I can't tell if ducks or crows,
air or water, what is my element
and who is talking?

Govaryu, I speak
or I am speaking, who says that,
lost in Kansas stubble, sun glare, gleaning,
torn flag, whippoorwill in drywall evening,
chatter of what is.

Hold your mind as you hold a party,
celebrate the absent occasion.
For nothing falls. Blue leather
wants you, conscious of being of some value
to the community, ants and foxes,
commonplace and romantic, both mean you.
You are needed. You are location.
You are intersection. Some kind of task
in some kind of skin.

Talking to itself we also are.

31 July 1995

TRAHISON DES CLERCS

So many analyses. Tic or tac?
Anfractuosités of the undercurrent—
can I make it plainer? The tangled
roots (not roots) of things (not things),

the empty set we spend our lives
(nor *our* lives) malingering, phony
ailments in a phantom body, my foot hurts.
And the Hegelian toe is not far,

a philosophic noise instead of answer.
Parade a naked lover through the streets of it,
the corridors of chalk, the pale discretions.
Rule of three. Two-faced

repossession men in love with vacancy!
President of the republic with his nose on fire!
Janus and his courtiers foretelling war!
Enough exclamations, this is only a little drum

sad waxy deerskin stretched
taut around the rim of noise I beat.
I'm talking about the treason of the intellectuals,
that they will talk of anything but love,

real love, that would kindle us to care
for all that lives, even our old parents,
those hateful burdens on a life of fun.
Love that would let me understand.

For love is lucid and sees all,
understands each being's needs

and tries to answer. If the loved one lets.
For being loved is difficult,

we have to crimp the habits of our case
to make a hook love grabs us by.
And love is greedy to recapture us
and chide the Nagasakis we have made.

31 July 1995

Betwixt a course and leather
a helmet of your hair I hoped
and it was given. From blue cars
women tend, and greet me
by the long station. No account
train from nowhere. But you
are here and the river idles past.
Eros is focus. Nothing more.

31 July 1995