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G R E E K

Eta. I heard,
oater, some crossword
word for western.

Understood. A label
with a meadowlark.
Bird Seal, it says.

What does it
close? What is silenced
when this speaks?

27 August 1995

Hads? Hands?
Mishearing,

came a smell of rain
at midnight

inside the windowfan
but no rain

came. There is a moral
in this dryness,

a manual
of how to behave this machine

it is,
to scuff the dark

earth, the dust
grey underneath,

the wordless kingdom
shows through.

There is always
something to complain about.

On the other
hand there is always something.

28 August 1995

Being quiet for a minute
while it speaks.

29 VIII 95

Species variation. Buy a ship
and catalogue the rocks
that stick out of the whole sea.

And cormorants on all of them.
Where is difference?
Or where is our difference?

29 August 1995

COLORS

The last moon of the first bullfighter
and women try to forget
sprinkler hoses in the blue hydrangeas
the stones are always thirsty

I mean the fine mist in blue
flowers loves you, coral
from so far away and glad
at what you have become.

29 August 1995

This is a hard-boiled detective story
about two white ducks and a rain cloud.
That did not rain. You can wait on this road
for hours and only the workers ever come.
Never the Distant Beloved you have learned
(from Persian poems, German music)
to anticipate with all your breathless cunning
like a sweltering man dreaming about snow.

It doesn't happen. The body is what dreams us.
What happens to it is what happens to you.
The ducks are mendicants — appear,
eat what we give them and go away.
Dreams are like that too, they shine
and dim, then leave us and we wake
on endless unknown Brooklyn streets
having only numbers and no names.

29 August 1995

T A T T O O S

How to map the heart on the skin.
With the needle of one person's fixed and
greedy attention a message writes
itself on the other person's skin. Pain
or no pain, blue or not blue.
This, when generally visible, is called
a tattoo. When unseen, just not seen,
it is called *the way you wear your clothes*.
When it is not just unseen but hidden,
then this script is *the way you smell*.
Across the room the scent is weak or lost,
and turns into *the way you make me feel*.
These are the four scriptures written on you
by the inky glance of those who want,
and want to know you much more
than you want or dare to be known.
We scar one another with our attentions.
And sometimes I've felt myself do it too,
my eyes staring at you like broken glass.

29 August 1995

EVENTUALLY THINGS COME IN THE MAIL

In a world of likely events
who can say what is most probable?
He said and folded the döner kebab
neatly in its waxed paper for you
and recalled you didn't like yogurt sauce,
too mayonnaisey. Therefore
I read Proust and find myself steadily
evasively therein, going out of doorways
when the Princesse de Guermantes comes in
or — a better idea just came, a little
prettier, more seeable, yet more secret —
when a seagull over Lake Geneva disappears
one moment behind the artificial geyser
that columns up so prettily against the mountain
backdrop and then comes back. Is it the same
bird we see beyond the spray? I'm afraid
we finally belong to our inclinations.

2.

The trouble with music is you can't turn a sound red.
You're stuck with the color of what you hear.
Given a *note* (some specious idea like G#)
you can make it any color, but once you do
you're stuck with its orangey quality, say,
pinged on the piano with your small right hand.
No blue for you. To get some other color
you have to get another tone and start again.
In India they do this so fast you'd swear
the color's changing. But it's just more microtones,
event after event, very fast, taking advantage
of our brittle attention span and the string's
unbroken unity. One more Indian rope trick.

3.

I was the Raj. I saw everything and wanted it

and took it and had it and had to go home.
But take away “it” and what was my wanting?

What made it mine? I was the empire
and still look that way, last of the naughty
pink children who owned the world.

For a minute. Then the door opens and the rightful owners
come back into the room. Stupefied with fear,
I stand here pretending to be singing a song for their pleasure.

30 August 1995

The engine attached to it tries to remember
but everything went before. Twilight comes in two flavors—
joy and terror both come from not knowing the limits of mind.
Confused with will. With the waitress's hip
brushing your arm while she's bending away to serve
muffins to another. Giving even while going.
Self and other, the varnish that confuses the painting.
The want is clearer than the one who wants it
and certainly clearer than the wanted. Ergo the want
is specious, partial, a dragon from before the heart,
ravaging the meek oat fields of what should be
just the way things are. A general treaty with reality.

31 August 1995

In fact you can't remember.
Cases of conscience. Tribunals
of the internal Kremlin
before which you are summoned
every morning before you can even pee

and you lie there, pillow-stricken,
waiting for the next horrible idea
to stand before you, talking.
You did it all wrong. And the whole
day before you is one
conspiracy of your past blunders
against now. Against the hope of peace.

31 August 1995

A house is an interval between landscapes.
The landscape can be trees, rocks, prairies, other houses.
The landscape is horizon
however far or close it is,
sunrise or huge house next door.
Landscape is everything that isn't house,
house everything that isn't world.
That is our interval, our little place, Bible and go sleep.

31 August 1995