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The way the hill
was on the town and the sign

the sign said hill
and the town says sun

today it will be warm
in the gas station

it is winter and a mountain
there will be hill

there will be five
wild turkeys on the mountain.

17 February 1994
Woodstock

SOME WATER OF LIFE

five wild turkeys

I VITELLI DEI ROMANI SONO BELLI

make it all caps, bottoms up.
5 Wild Turkeys
such meanings!

Drunk on language
the old
druids and bards and Edda-slingers
spewed an Atlantis Ocean—
never there before let's say
11½ A.D.

then they had to send Brendan and Maelduin and Madoc and Eirik
in all their fragile boats
over here to find what they had lost
with all their water, language is water,
it is the life of the cell,

to find the western parishes
where the dead don't lie down.

They cut themselves off from themselves by language.
Drowned a few good farms and a mountain range—
because the Angels of the Middle Air
are always listening
and in their endless wrangling with the Earth Unleavers
proclaimed at last the Truce of Water,

mighty Oceaen, a restless in between,
a wild détente.

You used to be able to walk from Kerry to Cape Cod in a day,
from Iceland in an afternoon

now look where we have gone.

You'll notice that it's always water causes linguistic confusion.
Look at the Rhine for example,
or the secret underground rivers of Manhattan.
The word 'cause' is misused here, isn't it,
but blame it on water,

on the waters of life
which pour confusion,
blame it on oceanside and middle earth,
blame it on Wild Turkey.
Go, Vitellius, at the sound of the Roman war-god!
And the calves of the Romans are beautiful
aren't they, and a word
never means what it says,
but only what I hear, you hear,
with our ears full of water

and five wild turkeys on the hillside
desperate for something to eat under the
crusted over deep snow of the hardest winter in forty years.

18 February 1994

The wind itself is the flag of a far country
I salute as it slaps me in the face.
I enlist in its Foreign Legion, I
am the woman I am trying to forget.

18 February 1994

[with thanks to a poem by Marie Coste]

The past the past
what is it

the past is what is behind us
that's simple isn't it

then why are we always looking at it ahead of us
if it's behind us and if it's behind us
how do we manage to stare at it and obsess with it?
Are we like those sinners in Dante's Hell
whose faces are twisted round and they weep
and their tears run down their backs
and wet the furrow of their backsides,
the fissure, he calls it, the divide,

do we water the pasts with our tears?

All grief depends upon the past.

And what animal does the woman
wear around her throat,
I never remember, I see the eyes,
quick twist of the animal musculature,
old silverwork of Scythians, the turn,
before, behind, what animal
twists this way around her neck,

what does she wear in the hollow of her throat?

She carries a wolf in the hope of her throat,
a gold eland stretches over tundra electric

we use found footage
we process what is found

we are the process

that finds itself
always coming forward
like an animal over the field

the process is always coming towards
using and re-using these
dreary recollections these frames
into which experience is tamed,

muted we use
what silences us

when we look
for what has been made,

made so thoroughly that no one cares.
Only the unmade
is any use to us,

what we can do our own work in, our making.

We tear the image
as the animal is torn,

head twisted back over the head
to see what we become.

18 February 1994

remembering Marjie

The words were waiting for this new room
cross something out and keep the bird

for memory is full of fingers

la neige était sale it said, I went
in and sat through the hot afternoon
waiting for the Glimpse to which the Gaze
responds, the glad given
to which the giving comes,
later, if it knows or runs or holds

or yesterday smearing grout across new tiles—
the way the thing is done,
cover everything to
cover the little hidden place, crevice or crevasse,
wall or mountain, a man
slain in the act of remembering.

Just strange enough to be one's own.
One spends so much time looking one never sees.

Strange articles of domestic chivalry—
man on porch watching naked trees.

For you will wear my colors, lordings,
and I will be your queen,
for he who watches is a woman
and that at least we'd learn to be,

and she who sees is no one now.

19 FEBRUARY 1994

SEEING, 2

This way he faces the sycamore
just across the stream
older than he is certainly

certainly older or certainly is?
Older than water or older than tree?
And what stream
can a tree step across
and why is a man sitting still looking?

Gawan, Tancred, Lancelot—
stricken with seeing they all went mad,
stepped across something moving

into a lunacy, not a lunacy,
moon's madness is a fine diffusion,
their furor was a hot
noonday madness, the horrible
bewilderment called action,

they swung their scramasaxes their holy
toledos their bowie knives,
they lifted their hands again trunk and branch

and only in loveling came they sane
and fought no more with the white tree.

20 February 1994

F O R T O M

The quiet room
I lent red flowers
and a slim
tablet of Lindt's
bittersweet chocolate

was the new room
in the house
view of the Sawkill
and a crow swoops down

dear Katha blessed song
it is good you have a lady
greet her for me
comradely from afar

tell her the room
is long and slender
as if to go.

20 February 1994

As at amazement cities stand

snowlight, you old parker
neatening our deplorable woods

—wood made out of weather, struggled
Lackawanna steel, time-trash
meant for caress, carriage-work—
first build a carpenter, a Nazarene forgiveman
to oversee the work of cutting loose—

you'll need a tailor then a sailor
—voiles, voiles— the obscurations
sheets of light

the light itself obscured her

(summer notch, a nick of woe)
constabulary dictionary define,
Greece-loose, a moral alphabet.

The Remorse of Alcibiades.
The Surgeon Jailed in Fort Jefferson

And when they are old, what then,
the pretty sinners? And when they see
the Consequences heaving towards them
and am powerless, usually, even to repent,
so busy am I justifying my misdeeds.

On the birthday of a villain candles still burn clear,
cake's sweet — it is the inner argument
that speaks more urgently,
what his cells attend to
and what the weather hears.

And under him the Lords are interested.

Calling from afar. (And have no intercourse,
earth-sacrilege, persons watching
other persons as they sleep, gruff Rodin
lays hand on everyone, seizes
round hip or hock, uplift, satyr in Cararra,
puffball powder as a lubricant for tint silver keys.

Slip in. Twist this. My magic person opens
Silenus-wise and am all medicine inside,
no razor blade but a good eraser.
A loop of letters round her neck
spells the godhead's name,
from Om-bound liturgies a lift of sea. And there's
your port of princes your port of pain your Tendriland.

Now have the consequences come.
Portages and pineapples. A curious infection. And a snake.

21 February 1994

How rivers dam at the frown of an idea—

planless truth comes best, having
no constraint but all.

But under even ice a current knows
until the force of spring — and every thinking has one
and a day — dislodges the false silence
when all the words are wedged together
in fear of saying what this moment
(there is no moment) needs to say
through you and only you (there is no you)

22 February 1994

Is there a bleaking
as of bears
with ice deciding
would we

or not who?
A slab of chocolate
misery from Ghent
a gone

conclusion.
This is the form
of poetry,
a woman hiking

a sun rising a
ferry slip
a lake crossing
to Canada

geese full of sky.

22 February 1994

This interesting snow again marks on my hand
some sand. This business of trusting desires—
desire owns a rhetoric, a dictionary,
a grammar of precise occasions. Language
in my lap. Go back to basics
and they're gone. The biggest lie is the beginning.
There is no start. Candlesticks,
lotus pillars from Luxor, upright from sheer habit,
stretch. This poor war. Red stop sign in a white world.

23 February 1994

And so they scud along, the vans
smooth over new snow and it's all
pretty, in a hurry, get to work.

But this is my work. I am the fireplace.
When it comes it comes in me,
like bats at milky twilights
turning through the intricate air. Pale
with memory, a man alone with windows.

23 February 1994

Some aptitude for deviltry, like a small
Protestant child, or chemistry. Over all
the treetops dew, and over every mountain
a violet haze of remorse, some kind of feeling
that makes you feel bad in a nice way.
Until the music comes, the ripe chorus
prancing up the octaves in cherry colored
satin uniforms of unison. Grateful
for every minute of quiet alone with sky light
I rub my dry hands together strangely loud.

23 February 1994

There is a neatness in the air today
I copy like a faithful schoolboy
writing down whatever he can tell
from the far-off chalkboard. White
memory. Chord of the circle. Long
division of the day. Snow pause.
Quick trucks. Snow starts again.
So long a line to have nothing in it.
But nothingness is sort of good for you.

23 February 1994

Delicate
as on mine
the snow
softs a sort

of sentiment:
it's hard to hate
a man with
snow on his hat

God only knows
how many
this may
have kept alive.

23 February 1994 16:09

One by one the wooden palings
cap with new snow.
Neolithic. By technology alone
the difference tell,
otherwise weak men fear strong men still.
The brutal farmers, the ones
(I thought as a child) who had done
something to the ground
that paid them back with such dry sour
cancers and paralyses. The stroke
of old man Ackerman
told me about the Earth.
More than a flute could anyhow,
and a flute is very wise.

23 February 1994

Suppose the wind (wind calm)
and it said. (How can no wind speak?)
Ravenous poetry!

And then she will come down the stairs
and I will try to answer,

Schumann, Hölderlin, the snow,
men lopping branches from the trees,
yes, this pen I bought in Switzerland

and all the while the cars go by,
her eyes are still

with quiet questions only the light can answer.

23 February 1994



Ten days after Valentine's
I still love you the flowers
are gone out in the snow
and the poems (there are always
poems) are put away
in the archives of amour
and here we are in bathrobes
at our new windows
barley porridge and apple juice
coffee coffee big yellow
blades of the snowplow going by
plowing the mailbox in
who needs
any more information than this?

24 February 1994

Little by little less.
Chalk of the day
vom Himmel hoch
or protest song
Chileans shmoozing
in the doomed cafe
o Odéon o droits de l'homme
I am the North Sea sunshine banked back of cloud
I am cherry red the glow of overheated Jokull stove
I am patriotic black & blue
a Spartacus of rhapsodes

donut undunked
or garden sealed
or well of no drinking
but such sweet flow
hydrogen oxide a song of Liberté
it has snowed sleeted rained iced
snowed for two days steadily,

Tartarus of meteorological Effects.
And now the chalk-white trees are soft
distinct delicate loop lines into distance clear
until the line assimilates to milky shimmer far
—an icon far away is mostly candleglow—
or music tone by tone is rapt
into a gorgeous confusion of crimson sound,
intricate forevers of contoured resonances

a turkey carpet spread up the crooked floor of time
and brightness beats against the cloud.

24 February 1994

P A I N

Trying to chew
trying to make do
with a sad mouth

things hurt until you know
and when you do

sometimes they stop,
leaving us to make lean records
of that strange violin.

25 February 1994

Can they go
in the sense
of being from
and gone?

As if a relation
had the potency
to know

and set things
in place
firmly
the way in summer

your fingers
from peach tree
gum stick together.

25 February 1994

Let me have
the Venetian for it
with many-colored glass
with amber and with waterways
running through it
like breath through the words
a child pronounces from the dictionary

all disconnected, telling
no story but his own,
pronouncing his future.
Let me have this air and this light and
waterways, pigeons and not much snow,
and a great dome thrilling
tile by tile to be a heaven house
hot with color on the coldest

morning over the unremembering wind.

26 February 1994

VINVM MERVM

The mere wine
the intaglio on it
of what is pure

no *uinum* lasts, *merum*,
undilute
for the convenience

morning drivers.
Her face carved in the trembling
surface. A dark cup.

26 February 1994

Someone to wake to
water
somewhere a balance sheet of orgasms
bent over one another time by time

the other ardor, called gay
only when boys do it
but always gay

gay against the tragedy of things, the demon Natural.

26 February 1994

I see the sycamore
in morning sun
white-wristed
lifting so much light

now the priest's athletic wife
comes for her morning run
uphill, the way in Winnipeg
fifty years ago

Cities of the plain
memory bent over me
sucking me powerfully dry

no mountain and no sea
a handful of nothing
a tree.

27 February 1994

THE HOOK

the thing that hears you
winter coming and it's St. David's
overdawn.

Nothing growing, zero
at my waking, slank and slender
shivering in trees, the sky pale blue with cold.

These scared exaggerations.
As if a good Mexican dinner
(nothing red and yellow,
just the deep warm allemande of brown
from bourgeois Yucatan,
something to eat with your tie on)

could warm me.
But who is listening? Blue.
Who else? The sun is starker
but the sky no deeper.
It changes in our eyes?

Did I ever tell you I have thin eyelids,
can count the fingers held
before my closed eyes?
Morning does something to me then
and sleep is hard. I go there
but can't get a visa,
they let me rest a while in the airport
then send me back to the day,

lights on, antlers blaring,
over the bleak fells of Keflavik.

28 February 1994

And then it's as if or not as if as if
the trawler scouring up the bight
had come across a school of demon fish
whose sight (quiver-fiendly in the shallow wash)
brushes the man brain with a sloop of fool,
of fear of anything that silvers down so soon.
A man can't stand a lot of that.

Return me on the custom of this tide.
There is a league of minded pirates
red-hosed and chalky highbrowed quick
to take a profit from the narrow wicks
where rough uneasy cruel and frightened men
wait for the merchants come once a quarter

and here they are with needles and dried fish.
The salt of things. We wait for everything.
It was a day like this, the sun itself was slow
and everywhere we went the geriatric roads
slogged under cars. The aisles did sleep.
And here the dark at last came down
and then the thought is crisp again, upon
the narrow coast the viking sea so wears.

28 February 1994