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The evidence abounds. Look you, a tattered star,
a flock of younglings without a clue, a heavy
hammer dropped by a weak father, look you,

these are twenty. These are more. Unswift remembrances,
thawed darkneses, bleak trains. A picture of a radio
in wartime, warming fingers on the bad news.

Mutes found themselves waiting to be still. Dynamite
in the woods to ambush us. The excellent pronouns of the mind
we think we are. Lancelot through perfect darkness led me

and by his breath given or withheld wordless taught my steps
to lift or shit. Unstumbling I gained the hill house in her name.
The pot was broken. The fort gaped. Everything was touch,

everything knew how to know me in the dark. I heard the owls,
they were a kind of priest of it, this thing that knew me till I knew,
and Antares was scorching the horizon, beating red.

Things we worry about, the sky. For what covers us
also is turpitude and dread, but solemn cold and serious
those gases and those glaciers that behold us. They are persons

until they do not speak. Listen, the evidence by negation affirms.

18 November 1994

So a month has hurried through my veins
and what do you care,
fat sun rising on such a different scale
I'm done so soon and you keep coming
blurting out the yellow facts of life?

At least in cloud a man can think:
There is no shadow. This love is permanent.
The precious homestead of the heart
will grow and harvest and the world will stay.

Then you come with your ups and downs
and analytic glare,
a snarling prefect in the dormitory
and we are scattered into separatenesses
trapped by the rhythms of photonic information
or some big word that means the tyranny of light.

19 November 1994

THE MORNING NEWS

The crows say everything
all the sense I'll make today and then some
seven big ones
right at my door
in the bare trees preaching

and rearranging the sky
the way they do

and that's the difference between me and St Francis
he preached to the crows they talk to me

maybe I can catch a little bit of what he said.

20 November 1994

Things I want for Christmas: a scanner and a morph,
a CD-ROM and Hadrian's Wall.
The National Gallery and a sudden squall of snow.

20 November 1994

A mouth in my veins
hungry for its proper vocabulary.
Girl grid, spasm of light
over the hill. Just drive slow
till the road arrives. Hardly
anything I can do. As the key
said looking at the door. Just this
one half-forgotten trick.

20 November 1994

The sheer radians of real-time analysis
shimmer interesting allocations through my pie—
this much is for the world this much for me
a man supposes, gazing past his breath
at a winter morning full of big ideas. Measure
is so comforting, a scale of values
glued to the side of your workplace
as continuous reminder of decay, the Renaissance,
Albrecht Dürer, high school triumphs
of sheer slide-rule dexterity, your old schoolroom globe
with analemma you alone could understand,
you swell. The difference between Bach
and anybody else you guess. Help us
in the hour of our need, three voices
with only one subject, small skill, cold hands.

20 November 1994

THE WHOLE WORLD TURNS OUT TO BE A PLACE LIKE SPAIN

Trying to hold onto it but it is not there to be touched
it is there to be desperate about, not a bus to miss
but an ambulance too late, tu sais? It is an area-way
under a broken house, a mattress down there and some bags
that might be what human life is for, might be Achilles.
There is always a stranger, so much for your roses
and Novembers, there is always a foreigner who can do it
better and dirtier than you. In grey uniforms they
were waiting for some kind of sunrise, blood in it,
a truck with a loudspeaker in it carrying the truth for miles
I suppose, at least it was our version of what happened,
our anthem the band played. I think I came here
because someone I loved had come here first.
Then I stayed for the war. The war was enough.
It was close, like mud. It answered every question like wind.

21 November 1994

for Charlotte, on her birthday

I have not said anything for days
it is the pleasure
of your company
that speaks for me, says

what I say. You have let me
be quiet in you,
a part of my mind
I never knew

we walk in together
in rain, heavy rain
at the end of the daylight,
I have never been so

together. Day by day
the perfections
come into view,
not like a poem,

not even Aeneas's
upriver journey in the hush
of an imaginary history
where every treebranch

trails in this immediate
flood. The wet of things
goes with us, not like
music, not like things

even, just this quiet
forward breasting
through moist time

like no particular

bird south for no reason.

22 November 1994

Imagine this: first a kitten tumbles out of a nut
fell from a tree grew from a fire started when you sat
one day began with a phonecall from the president
elected as a compromise worked out by diplomats
speaking an unknown language downloaded from a newly
colonized planet discovered in time for an exile
planned for all the excess population excited
by the last successful war won by your enemies—
what did he say? What will you call the cat?

22 November 1994

POLITICS

When a face is shallow
the minted coin
loses definition soon.
A wise army knows this
and chooses Emperors
for their profiles as we,
who have lived in this place
forever, know to choose
wives for their bones,
husbands for their bones,
guided by the tough
lean bone of the wind—
a face you can see clear
with your eyes half closed.

22 November 1994

for Charlotte

Caught nearby in the solemn speak-to-me of morning
I felt your hip
land-surge, moon-answerer, rise
in the sleep you gave me,
architecture of to be
together— I have awakened
in your city
god-like, full of prose adventures
that led me to this place. Last night
the hunters were at it even at midnight
shooting at their shadows in our meek woods.
All of this is built upon the guess,
the world is always listening so I woke.

23 November 1994

END OF THE VARIATIONS

1.

Listening to the Bach not brook I hear
but those tumultuous silences of a Saxon art
spilled (spelled) under hand
¡Mira! the teeth of a piano.

Certainly I saw some glints of snow
crossing past me in the hard north wind just now
and I'm not even in Paris, not the Marais, not even
a broker or a soldier, and still
the sky wants

(o so much it wants, the only
thing it ever wants)

to fall on earth

to cover us
with its serene implausibility

and what am I? a character with dried
rose petals on my desk, all right, I'm married,
I am a book and a candle maybe, certainly
we are composed of ninety percent water
(on dit) and ten percent ceremony,

a few snow flakes in the dark hedge: Germany.

I was there last year at this hour
and it was then too, the year's
first snow then too, never
get away from now, not with all this music.

2.

Awkward pause while the music ties its shoes—
what are we, are we Dacians or some pious barbarians
trapped in an overwhelming deity we have to feed
coastlines, pine cones, lovers' breath, linden tea,

what manner thing can pacify a god and get his sky to sleep

—head bent low a passenger goes by
crouching into the north wind, it has come again,
I'd whistle in it if I could hear,
we're thinking in the dark, that's all,
and all your sacred Portugals don't help a bit,
we're all impostors who turn out to be real

but we haven't come yet to that chapter in our book.
This is (je vous assure) what Jean-Sébastien Bach
in fact was thinking about while he was setting down
the hen tracks on thick paper turn out (three
hundred hard winters later) to sound like this. This thing
behind my shoulder, this sound effect, this unanswerable
complexity feels like somebody's tongue in your mouth of your head.

Relax, siblings, I'm just giving you part of it here.
Later the cathedrals. Later still the 18th Brumaire.

3.

And this is the last part, the slow one,
that some call “movement”
but I call a quiet searching in your head
for a remembered definiteness — a word
it might be, or the name of a town you stayed in
for twenty minutes while your train paused
waiting for the Lyons express to pass. Or a number,
one of those numbers smart magazines discuss,
odd properties of primes and cubes and Fibonacci series,

and you hold your breath, even waiting for the word to come.
It never will. The word is lost

and lost forever, a clock ticking under the snow,
a palace revolution that flopped before the king woke up.

All things come in threes, all things
happen and are lost again
into the comfortless sequencer of things,
this fate of ours we work so hard to make.
But the word stays lost, whatever you say
(you can even say it without finding it)
and leaves us with this emptiness the music annotates.

23 November 1994

(Written listening to the last sections of the *Goldberg Variations* played by Alexis
Weissenberg, a tape given me by Pat Meanor.)

As if the other side of the sun
(light cavorting on its own, lighting nothing
that we are, light en route, light free
of commentary, hurrying or idling
like Whitman in a summer dream)
a solitary idea got trapped in travelling
whose thinking is this burning
exchange of elemental properties
like the wife of a rich man late for the Opera,

chemistry does not suspend its operation.
That is the ocean mill, the near-to-hand,
tick lurking on a twig, shadow on my hand.
I have named all the apathies of detail—
now put the names to sleep and see.

24 November 1994
Thanksgiving

Things find their place.
Not places. The world is singular
they fall into.

It might be on Thirst Avenue
a performance piece or
a man selling knishes in the rain.

The system
is strictly
without alternatives.

I hope that will be music enough.

25 November 1994
KTC

