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RED DRAGON WAKES UP

red dragon wakes up it's Saint
Dewi's Day what does he know
about these names it is a battle
to break out of the earth one
delicate claw of him comes out green
from the earth is called a daffodil
o the Welsh wear them this day
too shy to put a leek in their hat or their coat

and here is the snow, zno, just as it's been
for a thouthousand years since you went
away. Dragon roar. Noise
of blood flooding into Lung Cave
to pump volume up Roar
of Immaculate Motivation,
Siarlat he spells you, what does he know,

he strives beneath the conduct of the earth
to make auspiciousness thrive
up through the shallow veil of dirt
we keep on Invisibility.
Green things from the red dragon

sprouting. Up into the aspiring air.
Come home and watch us wake.

1 March 1993

the news

for Charlotte

On my way to Clermont:

a male ring-neck Chinese pheasant crossed 9G
once so common
the first I've seen in years

At Clermont, looking west:

nine swans sail serenely down stream
in the clear channel

a brash of muted sunlight fleshy on the southern water.

And into that very light

a flotilla of, ducks.

1 March 1993

LAND OF THE ESSENCE

for Charlotte

Land of the essence.
Something meets something else.
One of them
is faced with alabaster
a third of the way down
—light seems to come from the top—
we know better: light, heat,
form— these are discourses,
“dialogues” like the Enthusiasts say,
those Jungian channelers in their Volvos.
Geb. Shu. You.

We know essence
is the reciprocal of accident.
We lie down in our bowges and disdain the opposition.
Self-smell as if a scent of paradise's honest meaning
there beyond the other person's smile. Poetry
is a dangerous neighborhood —Ireland, Somalia—
birds sing with iron beaks.

But from the *flower* of the papyrus they make
(I'm talking about Abu Basha of Gizeh,
ten generations of keen Arab sensualists
analyzing the passionate intelligence of
Afrika!) make an essence
that has the vertu of dissolving words again
into the radical act of what they mean,
subtle obvious of your absent body
shaping my (here!)

2 March 1993

IN MEMORY OF THE DEFINITE

for Charlotte

Could the prosper? Could a fall?
Will the time come when
a man's shirt fits only him?

The rime is subtle, lives between the van and the snow in the
sun sparkle of this pretty morning. California light on Hudson
snow. Drift of regional accents, the van backs out and heads
south.

*

Something as small as this. As definite. As desperate. All that
is needed is to let the mind know itself. Stop distracting it.
f-x*r! Don't tell it what to do. f N□□(! Things to measure
are not important. Measurement is a good skill but a nasty
habit. That is, don't marry the cow.

*

You think I'm not in love because I haven't mentioned a name?
You're wrong. I've seen the ruins of the abbey, stood in the
broken nave heaven-hatted and watched sprigs of vetch grow
out of crannies in the broken columns — how could I not be in
love? Through the portal I see the mountain with a little white
trucklet chugging up it like the Darty ad on TV, making the
weather. Rain comes to meet it. Meet me.

*

I walk in earnest rain down the long slope to the town, walking
more through names, of hamlets and houses and villas. We are

colonized by names. We colonize by names. My shirt is wet with it all. To have a coffee at the bar. To meet you.

*

The only difference is I live where they have no streets. The geranium now has flowered scarlet in this western window of mine, κατευδω.

*

There is another market. No sense in visiting. They peddle weird calendars there, portable bridges, bibles you can swallow. Preach religions made entirely of grease. Mostly they sell the excitement of buying. I stare at the back of my left knee and pray: O bony patriot, don't walk me *there*. Keep me from the *souks* where they peddle the shadows of women, and bottle weary laughter. Let me stay here with the kye dogs, muggers in the trees, wastrel starlings and the dazed knights-errant who stagger on their jades out of the deep woods and need the consolations of my ruined chapel. I give them moss to lick their wounds with, and the clean brackish water of respectful indifference, the best I have.

*

Who but a lover could stomach his own company an hour?

Presidents and kings surround themselves with chatterers, makes no difference what they say, like midnight talk shows, all it needs is the sense of noise. How could a king tell his court fool from his chancellor? There is not that much precision left in our world. It's just language, here in the Oval Orifice where meaning stops. Addictions wake.

Who but a lover could be alone?

*

Whence the Platonic oboe and love is needy,

hence the mean scruples of the Silentists.
Less is less.
Love's service is lip service,
kiss me and kiss me,
X's and O's, arms around the future,
my jaw on the heel of your hip, Amore, come
home before I learn yet one more language I'm afraid to speak.

*

Because language lives on fear. In fear.

*

Amazing, morning in the 40s. The snow looks soft again, all the shadows of the trees I see are pointing to me. It must be time for another coffee.

Byzantine absences! In specious Tartarland, King Prettyjohn sits on his golden Christian chair and interviews the mariners who come with news of other realms and other manners. The king listens kindly, as we listen to mourning doves or finches. Then he explains the customs of his subjects. Tea for Buddhists, milk for Krishna, coffee for the Sufi mugwumps itchy in their naked robes. The king draws from his treasury, overflowing with the bezels of unscrupulous resemblances. He hands the frightened seamen some trifles to take home with them as souvenirs of their failure to make sense: the precious spotted stone called *zee* that looks right back at you, the stone called *palam* that is clearer than daytime, and harder than the dark.

*

You cannot scratch the night. It is always there, unaffected by all your brave tungsten filaments, your ardent gasses, your butterlamps. It is a silent unmoving wind. It shrinks back sometimes with distaste from your mercantile display (the light on ordinary things arrayed) of sense objects. Let the breeze sport with your candle and whisk the blue soul of its flame away and suddenly the night is there. Not returning, always

present. Your cloakroom attendant. Your trusty minister.
Your svelte vocabulary. The hand on the small of your back.

3 March 1993

Cloth sky snow soon
Soft strikes us down.

4 March 1993
from Cathay for Charlotte

LIP SERVICE

for Charlotte

There is salt left in the world
and a blue flower. And a telephone.

The genius of our language
tries to connect.

But there is a power
such powers serve:

language wants exclusively to say
no matter what. Not communicate. Kiss.

4 March 1993

WHAT EVERY BOY WANTS TO KNOW

gasp of this hour
the hap
in sunlight
which is the gap we
have

our own air
to need with,

breath space
in cellwork

the spray
of lilac
we anticipate,
the long river
nobody forgets

o all this care
of what comes
certain

it begins to snow

and I ask again
what it is

talks so white

4 March 1993

Snow storm
the world one color
earth and sky equal
a car floats by

5 March 1993

FIRST MIRSUVIAN MEDITATION

No white sow basks on the elm-leafy banks of our Tiber—
The nation is the speech of things

The Land remarking.
And only means to bring everthing to mind.

To light.
To renew the world one imaginal country at a time.

5 March 1993

So suppose I look out the window and watch the snow.
Suppose I go, smelling of my wife's perfume from the silver
Ampulla that hangs by the back porch door and stand out there
In the otherness where white condescends to white and we

Wait loyally the exchanges of permission. To be where I am
Long enough to say: o look where I've gotten to now
After all the years of rhetoric persuading bodies to move,
The sluggish dance of countries and cities passing in slow

Parade under the old familiar aches, I lose myself in the surmise.
Suppose I do. It must be time to listen to something — the smell
Of amber. The confusions of French Poetry. Joe Kling reading
That snide piece about Japanese tourists in the Luxembourg

Sweltering in rubber raincoats. A furled umbrella beside a tower,
Notre Dame in summer rain. The war is over but the killing
Lingers under the somber archway we mistake for sky.
How could this be the world? We suffer a critical mistake.

5 March 1993

for Charlotte

The exposition of (as of) parted (pouted) lips
someone about to announce the name
a station on the suburban line
we all have to get off at someday

because she speaks. The colonies of air
we saunter in, just one fingersnap
from birth to dying. We are always all
days getting ready to die but don't.

Or at least the train goes on.

5 March 1993

GINGER ROGERS

Nineteen thirty-five in *In Person*. In and in. Time and place both governed by the same mistake, that things are somewhere, or are going there. Ginger. She dances in a long slinky white thing, sexier than she usually proclaims. Then takes off the long white thing and keeps dancing now in a flippy little number that shows her strong meaty dancer's thighs, not so sexy now. The men, the men — they tap-dance around her and each gives her a precious thing: it is the end of a white cord or ribbon to which he is tied. She takes them one by one and soon she's dancing holding all of them. She's holding them in one hand! A dozen leashed men in tuxedos, sturdy louts with sweet faces, beefier than danceboys would be today, but dancing nimbly, featly. They dance around her, she is the axis of their universe, in her flippy tiny skirt, her inflexible smile. She holds their cords so that they radiate around her like ribs of an umbrella, men in wide-shouldered jackets carousel around her, she controls them, swings them around without any effort but the energy of her own dance. She controls them by little gauzy tapes each man put into her hand.

Now hear the meaning: Women control men. Women control men by the intensity with which the woman, centripetally, addresses her energy to herself, her “dance.” Women control men by letting them put themselves in her power. She does the work and they spin round. That is what is meant by the dance.

I got born that year. The movie
has no Astaire in it. Ask me only
about the scene I here describe—
I turned the set off after that
knowing I would see no more
accurate exposition of our history.

My history. The satisfactions of an image.
Or perhaps the image or symbol itself
is absurdly satisfied. I followed gravely
the instructive doctrine of her legs.

5 March 1993

for Charlotte

Normally I don't allow myself what I call
Time to do this but today I do this
I look carefully at the veins on the back of my feet

Is it possible that these mysterious rivering blue lines
Not only show the tracks of all the places I've travelled
But also the countries of my future, its autobahns,

Grand canals, Basin Streets, Great Walls, sierras,
Metro stations lined up all the way to Novgorod?
Or do the veins (the music on this cable channel swells)

Reveal all the journeys humankind as ever trodden,
The land became the map, the map became the man?
All things are possible if I give myself the time.

6 March 1993

[AN ADMISSION]

And this too is a lie.
I didn't look.
I glanced and looked away,
afraid of ever
of my scrutiny.

Even in our own kitchen
early morning on my day off
I was too nervous to *look*
at the vein work,

easier to talk about it,
what is this profound
shallow-breathing desperate
nervousness this angst
anxiety this squeeze
that keeps me from
looking at a foot or a flower—

shyly I look away
abashed by suchness.
Afraid that what I see
will take off its clothes and come towards me.

6 March 1993

A PROBLEM ENCOUNTERED IN WRITING MY AUTOBIOGRAPHY

I think I'm turning into a crow.

Noisy mysterious obvious and dark
arcane mysterious overt on a tree
conspicuous in snow folkloric
dark portentous scary easy-scared
polemic but not murderous
carnivorous but killing nothing
wide-winged tasteless in people's way
eating grain I never planted
making too much noise being here
sitting apart on the highest
thing I can find apart from everybody
never far from human neighborhoods.

6 March 1993

WHOSE DOGS PURSUE ME STILL

for Charlotte

Some alternative to pitch
to tune my rosin with—
Aaron Kelly runs down beach
his bow arm aches with salt

this cliff a violin— it wasn't
unicorns I thought were there
hidden in the fabric of the world

it was Gwyddyl and music and biting things
and prisoners groaning at the water-wheel
sprinkling all the Middle Kingdom's cabbages,

it was fiddling on the pale gong of the moon
the bowed resonance of that green night
when the east a little bit begins to breathe.

Not unicorns. Not a steward
baffled by the madness of his king,
some other music, not a dead sea scroll
curled like a fax from your boss,
not this colorable universe of picture things.

Not pitch song passing tone on tone
what is it, I am this
and then I am this other thing.
A redhead on Worth Street a translation from the Welsh.
A cardboard carton broken over the horizon
with a family in curled up against the morning cold.

7 MARCH 1993

MADAGASCAR

for Charlotte

Trying to say this
it stumbles
over the shadow of a lemur
hopping from branch to branch

trying to tell you about it
I confuse the issue
with something I've seen
the way they cry

up at the sun
as if it were the moon
and could understand such solitary
explanations

I'm trying to say something
simpler than I mean
I tangle the issue
the branches go on forever

connecting and it is we
who have to master
the separations. We wrote
the book on it. The pause

and then it leaps again
and gets there. We get there
without understanding.
But in fact we're there.

7 March 1993

